THE BLUE & THE GRAY

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The Blue and The Gray

Or, *War Is Hell*

BOOKS BY

CHRISTOPHER MORLEY

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PLAYS

One-Act Plays
The Blue and the Gray

THE BLUE AND THE GRAY

OR, War Is Hell

REVISED *and* EDIFIED
by CHRISTOPHER MORLEY
from an OLD SCRIPT *by* JUDSON
KILPATRICK *and* J. OWEN MOORE

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PREFACE

AFTER DARK (or *Neither Maid, Wife, Nor Widow*) played 437 performances at the Old Rialto in Hoboken; THE BLUE AND THE GRAY (or *War Is Hell*) only 52; but the latter will always have some sentimental partisans who believe in their hearts that it was no less agreeable entertainment than Boucicault's famous melodrama. Figuring in the affair only as the journeyman reviser of an ancient script, I think I can speak with due detachment. To the scholar of old plays it will be apparent that THE BLUE AND THE GRAY is an adaptation of the forgotten ALLATOONA, conceived by the dashing cavalry commander Judson Kilpatrick and based on his own experiences in the Georgia campaign. It would be pleasant to linger on General Kilpatrick's career, which ranged all the way from Deckertown, New Jersey, to Santiago de Chile. It has been jocularly said of him that he is remembered by Southerners as the only Yankee general who took a bath during the Civil War; he was surprised by the enemy while bathing in a Carolina

river. Undaunted, he sprang into his boots and onto his stallion (literally obeying the command "Boots and Saddles") and, so accoutered, led the charge against the snipers. The Confederates (says the Northern account) fled "in confusion."

Like the lovers in his play, Kilpatrick did his wooing in the groves of West Point; petitioned the Secretary of War to have the final examinations advanced so that the class of '61 might take up arms immediately; was graduated and immediately married in the chapel of the Military Academy, and by the middle of June had already been wounded in action in Virginia. He delivered the Valedictory of 1861 at West Point. I wonder if his manuscript copy of it still exists? It would be a delicious item for a collector.

Well does Miss Dorothy Homans, who has looked up Kilpatrick's biography, call him the Hotspur of the Union Army. He was a brigadier-general at the age of twenty-seven, his regimental banner was embroidered by his wife with the legend "Alice Kilpatrick's Cavalry," and he always flew her corsage-ribbons from the staff. Miss Homans reports that he had "a romantic disturbed look that poets more than soldiers are apt to have." The death of his wife and baby in 1863 increased his furious recklessness, shown in the abortive attempt to rescue the prisoners in

Libby. Of his memories of the tragic doings in Georgia this play is constructed. There was always to me a secret tingle of reality when I heard General Corse say, in the bivouac scene, "Kilpatrick guards the stream." There spoke the voice of "old unhappy far-off things and battles long ago."

After the war our Hotspur was evidently perplexed to know what to do with his fiery energies. He stumped the country lecturing against the "atheism" of Colonel Ingersoll; he edited a magazine for ladies and corresponded with Alice and Phœbe Cary, Felicia Hemans and Louisa Alcott. He astounded his New Jersey neighbors by the high spirits of his gentleman-farming, with a Negro butler in livery, fine vintages, and hunting wild pigs in the woods. He ran for Governor of New Jersey but became Minister to Chile instead. He married a Chilean lady, was elected president of a fashionable club in Santiago, and when he died (not yet forty-six) the Chilean government honored him with a public funeral. I can imagine nothing that would have startled him more than to learn that his old play had been reincarnated in Hoboken sixty years after it was first written. Naïve and vivid as a Currier and Ives print, it has seemed to us worthy of preservation in our own special cedar-chest of Americana. I think it has im-

proved with age, for it deals with a great tragic issue which has kept all its romance and lost its bitterness. And it is as American as the label on Old Crow, or any other of the South's great contributions to sociability.

There is always a peculiarly genteel tenderness in recalling the details of a disappointment. Our production of THE BLUE AND THE GRAY was kindly treated by the critics and gave us much innocent pleasure, but as far as the business management was concerned we were "out on the hoof with nothing but scarcity," to quote a line from the play which we often repeated with humorous sadness. The good old show came at a bad time. The resounding *réclame* of AFTER DARK had died away; there had just been the stock-market crash which cut theater business in half as with a knife; we had scarcely any funds for promotion purposes; indeed, there were as many excuses as any amateur of alibi could imagine. Even the fact that our first rehearsal took place on Friday the thirteenth was occasionally remembered. But as much as anything else I remember the cold. In the chilliest weather of the previous winter the Old Rialto had always been packed to the roof with a capacity audience, who kept themselves and the auditorium warm by sheer human radiation; we simply had not realized

that for small audiences in midwinter our boiler needed some repairs. By the time we got our heating problem solved it was too late. I may be forgiven for thinking affectionately of some of those gallant little Monday night audiences of about fifty people, sitting bravely in their overcoats—and enjoying it even so.

In Show Business how many adventures there are besides those you see on the stage. How much more we love the memory of THE BLUE AND THE GRAY because it seemed as though every circumstance conspired against it. How can a solitary pen, dipping in an ink bottle, adequately evoke all the color, anxiety, companionship, and absurdity of such a venture? All those who have ever been banded together in similar expeditions against the Unlikely will know by instinct the kind of episode one loves to remember. I see Jasper Deeter, our somber director, with his tousled brush of black hair, sitting gloomily through some scene in early rehearsal and then remarking with raven humor, "My life is too full and beautiful to watch this kind of thing. You know perfectly well how it ought to be done, and you can do it. I'm going downstairs and get a plate of soup; I'll be back in half an hour and then I want to see it done right." And looking more like Edgar Allan Poe than ever, Jasper would descend to the little

Continental Grill and mutter to me about the "pattern" of the play. "A plate of soup" has become the standard phrase round the Old Rialto for any kind of nourishment. It was not far to seek, for in the chill of that December weather the stage was too bleak for rehearsal—at any rate, with so many Southerners in the cast—and in the little parlor of the Continental Hotel most of our preparation took place; with Joe Samperi, the friendly proprietor, watching hopefully in the lobby doorway. After the show opened the social scene shifted to Bill's Place (across the alley). No initiated frequenter of Hoboken will ever forget the picturesque scene at Bill's when Union and Confederate officers in correct uniform were lined up for hot clam broth and liverwurst; I wish some artist had perpetuated it for us. I have never encountered, even in the fabled Latin Quarter itself, so unself-conscious a scene from Murger as the middle-room at Bill's. The parrot (warranted exempt from *psittacosis*) scuffles in his cage; there are little groups in the soft warm gloom at the tables with red and white checked cloths; and "Mamma," the white-haired and beautiful Madonna of the Liverwurst, serves her delicious rye-bread sandwiches. If I wanted a perfect setting for a Santa Claus story I think I should lay it in the Old Rialto and across that alley. There would

be in it the douce Dixie voices of Pan and Virginia, our two Georgia heroines; a glimpse of the little box-office where Tom and Mildred were trying to keep warm with a battery of electric heaters; and the thrill of that dress rehearsal just before Christmas when the old show suddenly came to life and was actual—when General Sherman looked like General Sherman, and Throck's file of cardboard soldiers marched across the stage. For such moments theatre managers endure a thousand exasperations and disappointments; then they come near the god in the machine. For that pure thrill of fiat you must forgive them their trespasses. They may see anxiously but they do see whole. Neither author nor actor nor scene-painter nor critic, each intent upon his own partiality, can view the microcosm with such synoptic eye.

Of the melodrama of management itself, in so delicately poised an affair, it would be too personal to speak in full. Like the talented Mr. Keith Stillman, who played no less than eleven parts, doubling in all utility rôles in both Confederate and Union armies (his great moment was going off, as beleaguered Blue, to meet the Confederate envoy, and returning an instant later, blindfolded and in a gray coat, as the officer himself was sent to escort), the management had to attempt variegated tasks both

humble and hilarious. There are certain vivid pictures I shall always associate in my mind with this well-loved show. I see a legal office high up in the Singer Building where an agreement was signed which made the whole thing possible. I see a ferryboat groping from Barclay Street to Hoboken in thick December fog, so long delayed in her crossing that the anxious colleagues in the box-office, waiting for the check of destiny to arrive, fabricated the legend that their ambassador had fled to Bermuda with the boodle. I see a gray day in Wall Street when the noonday chimes were ringing and the upward gaze at terrific buildings made one believe that Anything is possible. I remember one Friday evening when a famous bookseller, passing along Hudson Street on his way to dinner at Meyer's remarked blithely that he had sold a certain manuscript for $500; and the box-office breathed again, for the next day's pay roll could be met. There was one week when we had to get along without tickets; as we couldn't afford to pay for them; so we used old pasteboards that happened to be left over, with dates and prices rewritten on them in ink. It was a constant delight, that week to hear Tom at the box-office window sturdily explaining to customers that the printer had made a mistake and the whole batch had had to be sent back. These are perhaps graceless

confessions, but they are part of the ensemble; there is no fun like loving a thing too much to stand on ceremony. The crowning irony of THE BLUE AND THE GRAY'S career was when the leading article in the *Times's* dramatic section, expounding the merits of the show, appeared the morning after our last performance. Looking over a folder of memoranda I find a somewhat cynical outburst jotted down in a seizure of bitterness. It expresses what sometimes passes through a struggling manager's mind but which he should be too canny to utter:

THE SHOWMAN'S LITANY

From rain or snow between 6 and 9 P. M., from canceled reservations, and from the man who thinks it original to yell out "Louder and Funnier,"

Good Lord, Deliver Us.

From ladies who insist that the stockings they tore on a seat were a brand-new pair of pure Italian silk,

Good Lord, Deliver Us.

From Overlong Tarrying Across the Alley, from Missed Cues, from Laryngitis, Tonsils, and Grippe,

Good Lord, Deliver Us.

From disputes with Equity, from Union delegates, from excessive I. O. U.'s and from the cut-rates,

Good Lord, Deliver Us.

O McBride, Bascom, Tyson, and all other agencies,

We beseech thee to hear us.

O critics, columnists, and Newspaper Men,

Give us a break!

There was a good deal more of this irreverent document, but indiscretion has its limits.

Our revival of THE BLUE AND THE GRAY was a joy to do and a joy to remember. We worked hard on it, we were proud of it, and the interpolated Civil War songs roused even small audiences to a gusto of delighted participation. The company pulled together with spirit and good humor, and none of us will ever forget the closing frolicsome performance of this piece, when the Old Rialto more than lived up to her Elizabethan tradition. The play deserved better luck, and we preserve it in this form for our future use.

Incongruously, perhaps, I specially associate the play in my mind with the constellation Orion. On those pellucid winter nights, getting back late and tired to far-away Long Island, Orion was always there over the dogwood tree,

strutting his stuff, great trouper of the sky. Whether the day had gone well or ill, it was good to see him there. It was steadying to recognize him, to know that he did not care whether we were a wow or a flop. Then some bread and currant jam and cream cheese from the ice box, some detective story for soporific, and—as Tom Shiel loves to say—"it all comes under the head of Amusement."

CHRISTOPHER MORLEY.

March, 1930.

The Blue and The Gray

Or, *War Is Hell*

A MELODRAMA IN FOUR ACTS

Synopsis of Scenes

ACT ONE

Scene 1 Interior of Cadet barracks at West Point, April, 1861.

Scene 2 A grove overlooking the river, West Point.

Scene 3 The parade ground.

Scene 4 The barracks (same as Scene 1).

Scene 5 Village Hall, Knox, Vermont.

Scene 6 A residence on Broadway, New York.

ACT TWO

Scene 1 A bivouac in the pine woods, near Rome, Georgia. Autumn, 1864.

Scene 2 Grounds adjoining Corse's camp. Early morning.

Scene 3 Interior at Guilford Plantation.

Scene 4 Confederate rendezvous at Bass Ferry.

Scene 5 Interior at Guilford Plantation (same as Scene 3).

SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

ACT THREE

SCENE 1 The boxwood garden, Guilford Plantation

SCENE 2 Sherman's headquarters at Atlanta.

SCENE 3 General Corse's headquarters office in camp.

SCENE 4 Interior at Guilford Plantation (same as in Act Two).

ACT FOUR

The Battle of Kenesaw Mountain.

CHARACTERS

TAYLOR
COOK
HARRY ESTES
CHARLES DUNBAR
RHETT
KINGSBURY
REED
LAMAR
— *Cadets at West Point; afterwards officers in Federal and Confederate armies*

ANNIE MAY BLACKMAN

HELEN DUNBAR

COMMANDANT, *superintendent of U. S. Military Academy*

SETH GREEN, *of Knox, Vermont.*

SQUIRE COOLY

MARIA GREEN

DR. SPENCER

CAPTAIN CHASE, *Quartermaster Corps*

BEN, *an old negro*

GENERAL CORSE

GENERAL W. T. SHERMAN

GENERAL SLOCUM

MAMMY, *an old negro woman*

Orderlies, soldiers, officers, citizens.

CAST

As revived at the Old Rialto Theatre,
Hoboken, Dec. 26, 1929

Taylor	*Cadets at West*	Mr. Philip Snyder
Cook	*Point, after-*	Mr. Jerome Coray
Kingsbury	*wards officers*	Mr. Roger Wolff
Rhett	*in Federal*	Mr. Jack Glenn
Harry Estes	*and Confed-*	Mr. Lloyd Nolan
Charles Dunbar	*erate armies.*	Mr. Spalding Hall

Annie May Blackman	Miss Virginia Morgan
Helen Dunbar	Miss Vasso Pan*
Commandant	Mr. Jerry Cavanaugh
Orderly	Mr. Sydney Andrews
Seth Green, *of Knox, Vermont*	Mr. Arthur Wyman
Squire Cooly	Mr. Keith Stillman
Maria Green	Miss Gertrude Ritchie
Dr. Spencer	Mr. Bruce Rinaldo
Ben, *an old negro*	Mr. Fred Holloway
General Corse	Mr. Jerry Cavanaugh
Captain Chase Captain Fitch Major Lamar General Slocum	Mr. Keith Stillman
Captain Reed	Mr. Jerome Coray
Telegraph Operator	Mr. Roger Wolff
General W. T. Sherman	Mr. Bruce Rinaldo
A Soldier	Mr. Harvey Hickok
A Soldier	Mr. Ira Knaster
Colored Mammy	Miss Gertrude Ritchie

*The part of Helen Dunbar was later played by Miss Marcia Hanan, and a new part written in for Miss Pan.

THE BLUE AND THE GRAY

Or, *War Is Hell*

ACT ONE

Scene 1

[*Interior of cadet barracks at West Point, April, 1861. Cadets Taylor and Cook.*]

TAYLOR

In a military point of view, perhaps Anderson did well to abandon Fort Moultrie, but I tell you, Cook, it will have a bad effect.

COOK

How so?

TAYLOR

It has emboldened those Southerners and looks like weakness on the part of the government.

COOK

What would you expect from an old rabbit like President Buchanan?

TAYLOR

You are quite right. A man who lives to be

sixty-five and does not marry a wife is not fit to be President of the United States.

COOK

I fancy this new daddy long legs from Illinois will show more firmness. But just the same, Moultrie could not have been held twelve hours if attacked from the rear, and I think Anderson showed good judgment.

TAYLOR

The only way to treat an incipient rebellion is to show a bold front, and this bluster would soon cease.

COOK

I believe you are mistaken. It isn't bluster. These Southern people mean just what they say. Did you hear what Dunbar was saying at the riding hall yesterday?

TAYLOR

Yes, and if we had a loyal officer in command here, Dunbar would have been dismissed from the academy before night.

COOK

Heavens, man, do you doubt the superintendent's loyalty?

TAYLOR

I don't doubt it, for he never had any. Almost every officer of Southern birth is the same.

COOK

You are wrong, Taylor. I am afraid those excited people have resolved to fight, but I have a higher opinion of soldiers who have sworn to defend the flag.

TAYLOR

Some of them would like to be loyal, no doubt, but this folly of state allegiance will prove too strong for them.

COOK

What will the government do, then, with half its army gone?

TAYLOR

Do? What any nation of spirit would do. I tell you, if Anderson be compelled to strike the old flag to Beauregard, you'll see a new army spring into life as if by magic. Yes, sir, from shop, counting room, pulpit, and plow you'll see an army gathered, and if this milk-and-water government is to be saved, *they* will save it.

[*Enter Cadet-Captain Estes.*]

Estes, Cook was just reproaching me for suggesting that the superintendent favors the South in this crisis.

ESTES

Well, I believe he does.

TAYLOR

I was saying so, and to prove it, the band has not played a single national air at parade since these troubles commenced.

ESTES

That is so, and it's a downright shame. The superintendent is influenced by that Southern wife of his.

TAYLOR

I think I've noticed some others who are also influenced by Southern charmers.

COOK

Yes, who were those gay little bundles of calico you were walking with yesterday?

TAYLOR

Their Georgia accent was as soft as cream, I couldn't keep my mind on my trigonometry.

ESTES

You are unduly familiar. It was Dunbar's sister and her friend. They have been visiting in New York and are come to the academy to admire the spring maneuvers.

COOK

Well, you had better be careful. Headquarters has ordered us all strictly within bounds during this time of apprehension.

ESTES

Sir, you need not question my conscience as a cadet. Women are gracious companions, but they cannot interfere in a national destiny.

[*Enter orderly.*]

ORDERLY

Cadet-Captain Estes.

ESTES

Sergeant.

ORDERLY

Commandant's orders for this evening's parade. [*Hands paper.*]

ESTES

Very good, Sergeant.

[*Orderly exit.*]

TAYLOR

What's he put down? Let's see.

ESTES [*reads*]

"Headquarters Cadet Corps, U. S. Military Academy, April 14, 1861. The band attached to this corps is hereby directed to play this evening——"

TAYLOR [*reading*]

"March from *Lohengrin*, 'Oh, Susanna,' and 'Irish Dragoon Quickstep.'"

ESTES

Not a patriotic air in the lot.

TAYLOR
It's an outrage.

COOK
It does seem strange.

ESTES
Discipline or not, I won't endure it.

TAYLOR
What can you do?

ESTES
As cadet-captain it's my duty to pass this on to the bandmaster. I'll just change it.

TAYLOR
Bravo. You're right. Cross out those damned Florence Nightingale tunes and put in the "Star-Spangled Banner."

ESTES [*takes pen and ink*]
We'll have "Hail, Columbia" marching out, "Star-Spangled Banner" passing in review, and "Yankee Doodle" for return to barracks. [*Writes on paper.*]

COOK
Excellent. That will put the fat in the fire.

TAYLOR
If I hadn't seen you write it I would have sworn the superintendent did it himself.

ESTES
I'll attend to this. [*Puts it in his pocket.*] This

isn't a young ladies' boarding school, it's a United States army post.

TAYLOR

What do you think about Anderson abandoning Moultrie?

ESTES

It was a wise move.

TAYLOR

If I had been in his place I'd have stayed till they shelled me out. Loose talk is one thing, but when it comes to firing on the old flag, that is another matter.

[*Enter Dunbar and Rhett.*]

RHETT

What is another matter?

TAYLOR

I say the South will hesitate before they fire on the flag. And if they do, gentlemen, it means war.

DUNBAR

And if it is necessary to preserve our rights, *we* mean war.

ESTES

Do you mean to say any act this government has committed would justify the South in firing into Major Anderson, or excuse a United States soldier deserting his flag?

RHETT

Estes, the South are by nature an impulsive people, and the outrages inflicted on us have goaded us to so high a pitch that to secure our rights we will not shrink from any responsibility.

TAYLOR

These are pretty bold words for a United States cadet.

RHETT

I have stated what I fear will happen. I do not say that I approve it.

DUNBAR

Well, I approve it. [*To Rhett*]. And any Georgian who hesitates to say so is no better than a Massachusetts abolitionist.

RHETT

If the worst happens I shall have to be governed by the requirements of my state.

ESTES

Rhett, you are a good fellow, 'tis a pity you favor this folly of state allegiance. If a war comes I believe you will be found in the front ranks; Dunbar, I expect, will bring up the rear with his Georgia militia mounted on alligators.

DUNBAR

You can test my courage here and now if you wish.

ESTES

Why, Charley, what should we fight for? Can't you take a joke? You're excited.

DUNBAR

I was never more composed.

[*Bugle call outside.*]

ESTES

There's sentry call. I must go. See you later.

[*Estes exit.*]

DUNBAR

You Northern men dursen't fight. You-all are cowards, you have no blood in your ears.

[*Taylor and Cook approach him.*]

TAYLOR
COOK } What's that?

RHETT [*interposing*]

Charley, you allow your passion to run away with your judgment.

DUNBAR

I will allow no man to insult me and not resent it.

COOK

Estes didn't mean to insult you, man.

RHETT

That pretty sister of yours he is in love with shields you from any such idea on his part.

DUNBAR

If my sister should fall in love with a Yankee

before this affair is settled, I should disown her.

RHETT

I believe she does love him.

DUNBAR

All the women seem to admire him, but I tell you, if it comes to fighting, these Yankee lovers will have something else than women to deal with.

COOK

I think, sir, you allow your tongue too much parole.

TAYLOR

Undoubtedly he intends to be offensive, but I always find the Georgia patois so difficult to understand.

DUNBAR

Northerners wouldn't know an insult if it was spelled out for them. They say things intolerable to a gentleman and then pretend it was a joke. Like that scarecrow you-all put to tell funny stories in the White House.

RHETT

For shame, Charles, for shame.

[*Bugle call repeated. They stand stiffly at attention.*]

Scene 2

[*A grove overlooking the river, West Point. Estes and Annie May Blackman. She is obviously setting her cap at him.*]

ANNIE MAY

Of course, New York was delightful, and we were most handsomely entertained, but the real glamor of our little excursion has been here at West Point.

ESTES

It is regrettable this political difficulty has come to a head just at this time. It has put us under restraint. [*Aside.*] This is perplexing. We are out of bounds, but Dunbar told me his sister desired particularly to meet me here —I see no sign of her.

ANNIE MAY

Of course, Helen and I pretended we came to witness the military procedures, but as a matter of fact we had much more romantic thoughts in mind.

ESTES

Naturally, you and Miss Dunbar counted on seeing more of her brother.

ANNIE MAY

Not exclusively. Of course, when Charley told

me you wished to meet me here alone I was confounded.

ESTES [*aside*]

There must be some breach of understanding.

ANNIE MAY

A female of breeding does not appoint herself with gentlemen in solitude. At least, not in Georgia. No woman could consider herself safe alone with a Southern gentleman.

ESTES

Surely you exaggerate—I mean, however great the provocation—I mean, I didn't intend to imply——

ANNIE MAY

Why, Mr. Estes! And I thought you were so chivalrous.

ESTES

I am glad of the opportunity to speak with you privately.

ANNIE MAY

Yes?

ESTES

You have influence on Dunbar. I beg you for his own sake to restrain him from any rash conduct just at this crisis. For the sake of his career.

ANNIE MAY

Bless gracious, Mr. Estes, what makes you

think I have any control over Charley? Do I seem to you the kind of woman who would have influence on a man?

ESTES

Perhaps I am not a good judge. Dunbar accuses us Northerners of being cold blooded.

ANNIE MAY

I expect your blood is only cold on the surface. Probably it has plenty of warmth, just waiting to burst out.

ESTES

I have had reason lately to suspect that that is so.

ANNIE MAY

It always arouses tenderness when one sees a place, or a person, for the last time.

ESTES

Oh, not for the last time, surely? Miss Dunbar visits New York often, does she not?

ANNIE MAY

I was not thinking of Helen.

ESTES

Were you not? I beg your pardon.

ANNIE MAY

Evidently *you* were.

ESTES

Ah, if she came North more often there would be no reason to rally us on our lack of warmth.

ANNIE MAY

Your temperature should begin to rise, then, for I see her approach.

[*Enter Helen and Dunbar.*]

ESTES [*aside*]

It is she! How can I manage a few words with her in seclusion?

HELEN

Annie May dear, it all looks so peaceful here, and yet Charles has been telling me the most anxious things.

ANNIE MAY

I'm so glad you've come, Helen. We were having such an argument whether Mr. Estes' blood is in danger of freezing.

ESTES

I might protest that, but ladies are always exempt from contradiction.

DUNBAR

If necessary I can assist Mr. Estes to keep his circulation from congealing.

[*Aside.*] Aha, the perfect soldier! He's been breaking bounds. My little scheme worked perfectly.

HELEN

Charles has telegraphed that we will take the late train to-night. [*To Estes.*] You don't

really think there is any danger of actual conflict?

ESTES

I still hope that forbearance may prevail.

HELEN [*aside*]

How handsome he looks! Oh, if I could just talk to him alone.

DUNBAR

The devil with forbearance.

HELEN

Charles!

DUNBAR

What has a soldier got to do with forbearance? Did forbearance ever storm a fortress or outflank a position?

HELEN

Charles, you're a fire eater. It's indigestible.

[*Dunbar and Annie May converse apart.*]

ESTES

Miss Dunbar—Helen—how can I tell you what these few days have meant to me?

HELEN

If they have meant something, please tell me. I may not see you again for a long time. Maybe not at all.

ESTES

Don't say that. No matter what terrible

things may happen, they cannot alter our own truth.

HELEN

It thrills me so to think of all the heroes who have studied here and then gone out to—oh, to do heroic things. I suppose you, as captain of the cadet corps, are just *required* to be a hero.

ESTES

Alas, dear, heroism does not transpire by requisition.

HELEN

Harry, you say such noble things. Can we not go where we can talk by ourselves?

ESTES [*hesitates a moment*]

Yes, come; we will go farther down the path.

[*Helen and Estes exeunt.*]

ANNIE MAY

Where are they gone?

DUNBAR

To the deuce, I hope.

ANNIE MAY

Shall we follow them?

DUNBAR

I thought you came up here to see me, and you spend all your time making eyes at that Green Mountain booby.

ANNIE MAY

Estes? I hate him, the stuck-up Yankee.

[*Bursts into tears.*]

DUNBAR

Curse the man, he's got both these females crazy.—Darling, don't weep. You know how I adore you.

ANNIE MAY

I hate you both. Take me back to the hotel.

[*Distant bugle call.*]

DUNBAR

Yes, we'd better hurry. There goes first call for tactics.

ANNIE MAY

You'd better call Harry. He might be late.

DUNBAR [*looks off*]

He will be. If he's reported out of bounds—ha, ha! Cadet-Captain Estes, the perfect soldier!

CURTAIN

Scene 3

[*The parade ground. Visitors standing at R. Band plays "Columbia" offstage L. Company of cadets enter R. in command of Estes, cross the stage, file L. upstage, file across stage at back and halt, dress as if forming*

wing company of whole battalion. Orders are given from off L. as if the line extended far offstage. Band plays "Star-Spangled Banner" off. Parade dismissed. Sergeant Rhett closes the ranks. Band plays "Yankee Doodle." Dunbar and three others step out of the ranks.]

[*Enter Estes L.*]

ESTES [*drawing sword*]

Fall in! What does this mean?

DUNBAR

I never will march again to that damned Yankee tune.

ESTES

Do you refuse?

DUNBAR

Yes. I'll be dismissed first.

ESTES

You will march to that music first and be dismissed afterward. [*To the company.*] Front —four files from the right, two paces forward —march! Now, gentlemen, will you take your places in the ranks or shall I be compelled to force you?

[*Three step back into line; Dunbar hesitates.*]

Well, sir, what do you say? Fall in!

[*Dunbar steps into his place.*]

Right face! Forward, march!

[*Sergeant marches them off the stage. Other ladies and gentlemen go off R. Helen comes down.*]

HELEN

Harry! I have witnessed this act of insubordination on the part of my brother, and I am pained to see it.

ESTES

You are not half as much pained as I am, Helen.

HELEN

I hope you do not intend to put your threat into execution. Remember he has the quick temper peculiar to all our people and regrets a hasty action as soon as committed. Harry, I know he is headstrong and difficult, but he is *my* brother.

ESTES

You know with what pleasure I would grant your every wish; but in this case you ask what is impossible.

HELEN

What! would you disgrace him, myself, and our family by a dismissal from the academy? And after the things we have just said to one another?

ESTES

I have to do my duty. The dismissal, if it comes, is his fault, not mine.

HELEN

Remember we are Georgians. You do not

comprehend how we are provoked by you Northern people. You don't even talk the same language we do.

ESTES

Helen, I love the way you talk it. I worship you, even when you are angry with me.

HELEN

It is a queer way of worshiping, to humiliate my own brother.

ESTES

A true soldier knows but one government, one people, and one flag. If your brother entertains views different from these he has no business here at West Point.

HELEN

Surely *you* do not sympathize with this feeling of hatred which is making such progress here in the North?

ESTES

I sympathize with any movement which is to combat this monster secession.

HELEN

Then would you lend your courage and your sword to subjugate my people? You say you want to free the slaves, and to do so you would make slaves of ourselves.

ESTES

My sword and my life belong to my country.

HELEN

Have all your fine sentiments come to this, plighting me your love, vowing you would be my life's protector——

ESTES

You do not understand.

HELEN

Yes, I do, sir, I understand perfectly. You would be the husband who would swear before high heaven to be a woman's protector and then, at the bidding of a lot of Massachusetts fanatics, wantonly slay her people.

ESTES

Helen, you know how dearly I love you; my whole existence would be devoted to your bliss; can you not understand this tragic struggle between my duty and my love for you?

HELEN

I believed you loved me; believing which, I gave to you my heart, for you were dearer to me than all the world beside. Our vows are pledged, requiring naught but Heaven's approval to make us man and wife. My word is given, and I should not ask it otherwise, but to be the wife of him who would invade our homes and murder my people—*never!*

ESTES

I am a soldier, and even when death itself stands in my path of duty, I may not turn aside. 'Tis my profession and my oath to bare my breast at my country's call, and with it shield from insult her honor. That I love you, you are assured, but without a blush I own I love my country more. If to perform the duties my government has here fitted me for degrades me in your eyes, then I must release you.

HELEN

Sir, I accept your generous offer. I will never be the bride of my people's executioner.

ESTES

If your people perish, it will be the death of the suicide, regretted alike by all.

HELEN

We do not ask your sympathy, sir; we will have a government of our own.

ESTES

If you will cast your lot with these misguided people, then henceforth our paths lie wide apart.

HELEN

My path leads me toward my Southern home; it may be one beset with danger, privation

and woe. I am a Southern woman, I shall not hesitate to take it.

ESTES

And my path is where my country's flag may lead; certainly to danger, perhaps to death, but never to dishonor. [*Takes her hand.*] But if we must part, let it not be in anger. I believe you are governed by a sense of duty, and I ask the same consideration for myself. If you know I loved you . . .

HELEN

I am not shallow enough to deny our passion. This cruel destiny is greater than ourselves.

ESTES

My heart will not change; but even to possess your love, which I should prize above all treasure, I cannot prove false to my country.

HELEN

Then we are to be strangers?

ESTES

If, to be friends, I am to forsake the old flag —yes.

HELEN

Then, sir, farewell.

ESTES

Farewell, farewell!

[*They part.*]

CURTAIN

Scene 4

[*The Barracks; same as Scene 1. Enter Cadets Cook and Taylor from parade, removing equipment.*]

TAYLOR

I tell you, this affair of Estes and Dunbar is going to make trouble.

COOK

So it should. Dunbar and those renegades ought to be drummed off the Point.

TAYLOR

Do you believe Estes will report it?

COOK

Of course he will; he's got to; and unless the superintendent stands by him, Dunbar will be dismissed sure.

[*Enter other cadets.*]

Let's have a song.

TAYLOR

"Benny Havens"!

[*They sing "Benny Havens, Oh." Enter Estes.*]

ESTES

There is serious news over at headquarters, gentlemen.

COOK [*aside*]

I told you he would report them.

ESTES

The commandant had a face on as long as my arm. You may depend upon it, matters have reached a climax at Charleston.

[*Sound of distant cheers.*]

TAYLOR

What is that for?

[*Enter Kingsbury.*]

ESTES

What's the cheering for, Kingsbury?

KINGSBURY

I hurried over to tell you. Sumter has fallen, has surrendered to Beauregard. The flag has been fired upon by a band of traitors. Dunbar and the Southern cadets have got together at Company D's barracks and they are cheering for Beauregard and the Palmetto flag.

ESTES

Boys, will you stand that?

ALL

No, no, no.

TAYLOR

Let's rally all the men that are true blue and clean them out.

COOK

Come on!

KINGSBURY

Dunbar is top dog over there. He swears he'll kill you the first time he sees you, for reporting him.

ESTES

Then the quicker he sees me the quicker he'll have a chance.

[*Sound of cheers outside.*]

TAYLOR

Wait a minute, they're coming here.

[*Sound of cheers outside, and singing "The Bonny Blue Flag."*]

ESTES

We're ready for them.

[*Enter group of Southern cadets led by Dunbar.*]

DUNBAR

Three cheers for Beauregard and a Southern Confederacy!

KINGSBURY

Any man who wears the uniform of a United States cadet and cheers for that traitor is a traitor himself.

DUNBAR

Whom do you call a traitor?

KINGSBURY

Any man who turns his back on his country.

DUNBAR

What's the matter with the perfect soldier Estes? I don't hear *him* saying anything. At least, now I won't have to have him for a brother-in-law.

ESTES

I used to have reasons for not wishing to thrash you. Those reasons no longer exist.

DUNBAR

You Yankee scoundrel! [*Strikes him, knocks Estes against the wall.*] Now, report me for that!

[*Estes springs on him. General fight. Estes knocks Dunbar down. Shouts outside, "Turn out the guard." Enter Commandant with guard.*]

COMMANDANT

What does this mean? A riot? This is West Point.

[*The cadets spring to attention.*]

ESTES

It means this, sir, that this academy contains men who would use its teachings to destroy the government they have sworn to defend.

COMMANDANT

This is shameful. To your quarters!

ESTES

I beg pardon, sir, but we have an affair of honor——

COMMANDANT

Silence! Estes, you are very solicitous for the honor of the corps. How is it that you are reported to me as having been out of bounds this afternoon, breaking discipline in a time of crisis. Have you any explanation?

ESTES [*looks at Dunbar*]

No, sir.

COMMANDANT

Gentlemen, we stand on the eve of war. Private and personal sentiments are abolished; the routine of war must prevail. Cadet Estes, I find you guilty of conduct unbecoming a United States officer. Stand out, sir.

[*Estes steps forward and salutes.*]

You are dismissed the service in disgrace.

[*Commandant tears off Estes' epaulettes.*]

To your quarters, every one of you.

[*Exit Commandant and guards.*]

DUNBAR

So you thought you were the only one that could do any reporting, eh? You damned Yankee!

[*Estes springs at him; both are restrained by others.*]

CURTAIN

Scene 5

[*Village Hall, Knox, Vermont. Men assembled preparatory to a war meeting. Table with pen, ink, and paper. Chair for chairman. Flag hung above. Enter Seth Green, aged Vermonter, with old musket.*]

SETH

Howdy, boys, howdy. I hear'd you figgered on a war meetin', so I thought I'd jest come right along down an' give you some o' my notions. These 'ere meetin's is all very well, but what we need is men to fight. If these seceshers is out to bust up the country, speechifyin' won't stop 'em. The only way to stop 'em is jest git up an' git. Git down yer shootin' irons and come out and fight!

SAM LEE

Bully for Seth!

SETH

My grandfather fit and died in the Revolushun and so did I in 1812. I'm his namesake. My name's Seth Green and I'm here! [*Brings his gun down on the floor. Cheers.*] If you fellers are goin' to lick these seceshers you got to spit on yer hands and the women folks better

go to scrapin' lint. Yes, sir, pull up yer galluses and come out and fight.

[*Cheers. Seth freshens himself from a canteen flask.*]

SAM

I see you brought your weapons with you, Seth.

SETH

Yes, sir, the same old canteen I used at Lundy's Lane, full o' Green Mountain applejack. I was nicked in the cheek by a bullet, and that applejack was so durned medical I didn't know for twelve hours that I'd been hit.

SAM

Why, Seth, I never noticed any scar on your cheek.

SETH

It wasn't that kind of a cheek. It was the kind you set on.

OTHERS

Ha, ha, ha. That's what comes of turnin' your back on the enemy.

SETH

I jest turned round to get the sun outen my eyes. I was a-loadin' this old gun; yes, sir, the same old critter my grandpap fit and died with in the Revolushun.

SAM

Oh, let's see it.

[*They crowd round.*]

SETH

Here she is, boys, she's here. Yes, sir, I turned that stock myself out o' the old walnut bed Marier brought with her when we married. That bed's seen a lot o' fightin'.

[*They laugh.*]

What you all laughin' about? It's the same old gun, I tell you, it's Revolushunary. There might never have been no Revolushun for all you ever did to help.

[*Drum and fife heard off; enter, followed by Squire Cooly, and Estes in civilian clothes.*]

COOLY [*takes the chair*]

Gentlemen, you all know our fellow townsman Harry Estes. Mr. Estes has had West Point training, and he has authority from the town to raise his own company of volunteers.

ALL

Speech, speech!

ESTES

My fellow citizens, the time for speeches has passed. Our Southern brothers have appealed to the sword, and we have no other course. I tell you frankly that I was compelled to leave

the military academy under very disappointing circumstances. It makes me all the more eager to do my duty.

SETH

I never studied the refinements of fightin' as an art, but I reckon I can still handle the old musket. All this talk about compermise and constitution don't chew no tobacker. I don't worry none about West Pint, if I got to have a boss I'll jest take you. You don't remember me I s'pose; my grandpap fit and died in the Revolushun, and so did I at Lundy's Lane. My name is Seth Green, and I'm here. [*Brings his gun down on the floor.*]

[*Cheers.*]

ESTES

Do you mean you wish to enlist?

SETH

Of course I do. Uncle Abe wants sojers and he's got to have 'em. [*Going to table.*] But this blowin' is all humbug. Come, Squire, where's yer paper? If you'll jest write "Seth Green" down, with room for my sawbuck, I'll make my mark and be a sojer agin in two minutes.

ESTES [*shaking his hand*]

Very well, Seth. There's my hand, and we'll stick to each other.

SETH

Come, Squire.

[*Cooly writes his name.*]

Captain, you hold the old critter a minute. [*Gives his gun to Estes.*] You know I make my mark the same way Josh Collins does, and I want you to remember this one is mine.

ESTES

All right, Seth. Your name stands at the head of the roll, and you're a corporal.

COOLY

Three cheers for Corporal Green, the first volunteer from the village of Knox.

[*Cheers.*]

SETH

I say, Squire, I think more signin' and less hollerin'ld make more sojers. Come on, fellers; come up, come up.

ESTES

I'm sure that after this fine example there will be no hesitation.

MAN

I'm in; there's got to be someone to look after old Seth. If the Johnny Rebs don't kill him his rheumatiz will. [*Signs.*]

SETH

Don't you worry about me; that applejack is mighty medical. [*Takes a swig.*]

ESTES

I must be honorable enough to say to you volunteers, we are not in for a picnic. The Southern soldiers are brave, determined men and convinced of their cause.

[*Others step up and sign.*]

SETH

Step lively, boys; if we get a hundred we can have a company of our own with Captain Estes at the head of us. Squire, I wish my sons was here, they're both out West. We've only got but two boys, but if Marier and I had known this thing was coming twenty years ago, we'd been ready for 'em, yes, sir!

ESTES

Now, gentlemen, if you will fall into line I will administer the oath and you can then return to your homes. We will hold our first drill to-morrow. [*To Seth.*] Corporal, get the men into line.

SETH

Fall in, fall in! Get yourselves into a straight line. Stand up stiff, and don't keep lookin' at the floor as if you was ashamed of what you're doin'. You ought to swell up like bakin' powder. Look at me, this is the way we stood up on the Canadian border. [*He teeters a bit.*]

[*Enter Maria.*]

MARIA

Why, Seth, you old fool, what do you think you're doing?

SETH

Now, Marier, you dassn't bother me now, I'm enlisting. I'm a '76er, you know I am. My grandfather fit and died in the Revolushun and so did I at Lundy's Lane.

COOLY

Mrs. Green, Seth insists on heading the list, will that make any difficulty for you?

MARIA

Difficulty? Bless you, Squire, I'll get along fine. I'd sooner have him off fighting the South Americans than at home fighting with me.

ESTES

We'll take good care of him, Mrs. Green, and his patriotism will be a fine example to the others.

MARIA

I hope it *is* patriotism and not just applejack.

SETH

Marier, you don't deserve a Revolushunary husband. They're going to make me a corporal. You'll be Mrs. Corporal Green. But if you're mad about it, I won't go.

MARIA

No, Seth, I'll be proud. Proud of you all. How soon are you going?

SETH

We'll go to York next week, and from there we're goin' to fight. Hoorah! And you kin remember the stock of my gun was made from your old bed, the old bed we——

MARIA

That'll do. Hush, you don't want Squire and the others to think you're tight, they won't take you.

SETH

You're quite right, Marier. I'm sorry if I was a little sprung, but we don't make war on those foreigners every day in the week. Excuse me, Captain, I'll get right back in line.

ESTES

Now, men, hold up your right hands and we'll administer the oath. Do you solemnly swear to be faithful to the government of the United States, to obey its officers, honor its flag, and defend it against the assaults of its enemies, with your lives, if necessary?

ALL

We swear.

ESTES

Dismiss until to-morrow.

SETH

Hooray for the Knox Volunteers. Now don't you worry about me, Marier. My grandfather fit and died in the Revolushun, and so did I at Lundy's Lane. I ain't afraid of those redcoats.

MARIA

You come home and get a night's sleep.

CURTAIN

Scene 6

[*Drop in 1 shows a city residence in New York with large window looking out on Broadway. Dr. Spencer reading the New York* Herald; *Squire Cooly, Maria Green.*

DOCTOR

Well, Squire, it was fine of you and Mrs. Green to come all the way from Vermont to give the boys a send-off.

MARIA

I knitted all those socks and drawers for old Seth; I might as well see him march in 'em.

DOCTOR

They'll soon be here. The *Herald* says they embark at pier 17 and they will have to pass this way.

[*Music heard in the distance; Maria weeps.*]

COOLY

Now, Maria, you mustn't feel badly. Seth will be all right.

MARIA

I know he will, but I've been kind of sharp with him sometimes, and I can't help crying.

[*Band passes, playing "John Brown's Body."*]

COOLY

What troops are those, Doctor?

DOCTOR

Those are replacements for the Seventh, our crack New York regiment.

MARIA

They do look fine, don't they.

[*As the colors pass the men salute.*]

DOCTOR

God bless the old flag and its noble defenders.

[*Another company passes.*]

This is the students' company, from Columbia college.

COOLY

Students, going to war as common soldiers?

DOCTOR

Yes, Cooly, this patriotism extends into all classes and divisions of society.

[*Another company passes.*]

MARIA

There's some mighty solid-looking men.

DOCTOR

That is the German company from Jersey City. A great many old soldiers among them.

MARIA

Does the government allow them lager beer?

DOCTOR

No, Mrs. Green, I'm afraid not.

MARIA

Well, I would if I was gov'ment. I don't see how they can do their best without lager beer.

COOLY

Here come our boys!

MARIA

Oh, don't Seth look courageous.

COOLY

This is the company raised by our young Harry Estes. All from our own township, Doctor.

DOCTOR

Very soldierly. Hurrah boys and God bless you!

MARIA

Seth, Seth! Here's Marier!

[*Seth, Estes, and others pass outside the window. They wave and cheer.*]

SETH

Hullo, Marier!

MARIA

Be sure to change your underclothes if you get wet.

SETH

Don't worry about me. My name's Seth Green, and I'm here.

[*Curtain descends on apparently endless line of troops passing beneath the window, with martial music.*]

End of Act One

ACT TWO

Scene 1

[*A bivouac in the pine woods, near Rome, Georgia. Autumn, 1864. Downstage R., tent pitched for General Corse. Camp fire L., men of Estes' company sitting about. As the curtain rises they are singing "Marching Through Georgia." Seth Green busying himself roasting a turkey over the fire.*]

SETH

Well, boys, this is better. I don't mind the war if I can just get regular vittles.

ANOTHER

It's goin' to be right smart hard for old Seth to settle down again arter all this campaignin', a man of his age.

SETH

I want to tell you, us Vermonters ain't no older than they choose to be. My grandfather fit an' died in the Revolushun——

ANOTHER

Yes, and you fit an' died in most every poultry run in Georgia.

ANOTHER

I never see such a man to steal poultry as old Seth.

SETH

I ain't surprised these South Americans likes their country. I like the climate myself. This time o' year in Vermont Maria and me has to go to bed at six o'clock to keep warm.

ANOTHER

When I get home I'm goin' to learn my old woman to make this here sweet potato pie.

ANOTHER

I'll say this for the Johnny Rebs, they sure have taught my feet a lot o' geography.

SETH

Gosh, it's an awful long way home. If 'twa'n't for Marier I'd be most inclined to settle down here and raise a new family.

ANOTHER

Some o' these big plantation houses would be pretty nice to live in, with them niggers mixin' up juleps for ye.

ANOTHER

They tells me Sherman's men gets a chance to

do a bit o' plunder now and then but Cap'n Estes is too strict.

ANOTHER

He surely is a hard driver.

SETH

Cap Estes is a good officer, he don't allow no nonsense. They was all like that in the Revolushun, that was a gentleman's war. Swiping poultry ain't plunderin'; soldiers is always supposed to have a drumstick now an' then.

ANOTHER

I don't like these here pine woods. Gin'ral Sherman makes himself all snug to Atlanta, but he leaves us out here where it's lonely.

ANOTHER

It's a bit spooky round in these here hills. There was a man picked off on sentry-go last night and nobody could figger where the shot come from.

ANOTHER

I see a light in that big plantation house long arter folks would be abed.

SETH

Well, the rebs has tore up all the railroad, so if you don't hanker for what we got you better walk home.

ANOTHER

Where's that old nigger what was fixin' up the tent for General Corse?

BEN [*coming out of the tent*]

Here I is, massa, here I is.

ANOTHER

Come on, Ben, give us one o' your songs.

[*Ben sings spiritual.*]

Massa run, ha-ha!
De darkey stay, ho-ho!
It mus' be now de Kingdom's comin',
And de year ob jubilo!

[*Enter General Corse behind tent. The men at the camp fire talk quietly together.*]

BEN

Is dat you, Gineral? Dey done tole all us niggers up to de big house to look sharp, dat Massa Lincum's sojers had gained de day and de big captain ob de companies he'd be heah. Yessah, yessah, de fiah's burnin' an' de hoe-cake's bakin', suppah ready in a minute, yessah, yessah, an' ole Uncle Ben de happies' niggah in de Souf. A bottle o' wine, General, fum de cellar up to de big house.

[*Corse sits in camp chair at table outside tent. Ben moves to and fro, serving supper for Corse.*]

CORSE

Well, not a bad bivouac after a hard day's fighting. None but a poor slave would have prepared a reception like this for a Northern soldier.

[*Estes enters, salutes.*]

ESTES

Any orders, General?

CORSE

Are the troops all in camp?

ESTES

Yes, General.

CORSE

Plenty of wood and water?

ESTES

Yes, General.

CORSE

How about forage?

ESTES

Very little, General.

CORSE

How is that? I saw plenty at that white mansion with a large portico we passed just after the battle.

ESTES

I believe the quartermaster didn't get any there, sir.

CORSE

Why not? Who lives there, anyone with a safeguard?

ESTES

According to the quartermaster, sir, one with the best safeguard in the world: a young lady with a beautiful face.

CORSE

And her beauty stands sentinel over her forage. The devil! Is this a war or a bachelors' cotillion?

[*Enter Quartermaster Captain Chase, saluting.*]

Quartermaster, has all the forage in the neighborhood been secured?

CHASE

Not quite all, General.

CORSE

Forage is as necessary, sir, as ammunition, and I want you to understand that nobody is exempt from furnishing it.

CHASE

Well, sir, I sent Captain Davis to that large house, Guilford Plantation, they call it, but his wagons came back empty; then I sent Captain Milligan, and he failed. Finally I went myself, and the lady treated us so graciously, and talked so sweetly, really, sir, I

don't know just how it happened, but I didn't have the heart to take anything she had.

CORSE

She must be a siren indeed if she can talk round a quartermaster.

CHASE

There's something else about that house, General. Since we've been in these woods there's been some firing at night. We haven't located it, but some of the men believe it comes from that direction.

CORSE

Ha! You know Sherman's orders.

CHASE

I could find no one there but a couple of women and a few niggers.

CORSE

Have your wagons ready at seven o'clock in the morning. Order a strong detail to accompany you. We'll see about this business. Captain Estes, you look into it.

ESTES

It might be better, sir, if you made your headquarters there. You would be more comfortable than here in the open.

CORSE

No, Estes, I'm an old soldier; a camp cot and canvas over me is good enough. I don't like

billeting in other people's houses, whether it's friend or enemy. [*To Chase*] Attend to your detail, Captain.

CHASE

At once, General.

[*Salutes and exit. Ben serves supper for Corse and Estes.*]

CORSE

Well, uncle, you appear to be fond of singing. While we eat the hoecake suppose you give us a song.

BEN

All right, massa, all right. Ise done got to be moughty old, cain't sing like I used to, but I'll try. De good Lawd done heerd our prayer meetin's and de angels ob de Lawd is come to set de darkeys free.

ESTES

We began to think at one time the angel of the Lord would have to go the other way.

BEN

No, massa, no; de good book say de piller of cloud by day and de piller afire by night led Massa Moses, and so will de good Lawd lead Massa Abr'am till all de bondmen come free.

CORSE

So you don't get discouraged, hey?

BEN

Bress de Lawd, no. No one cain't destroy de promise of de Good Book. De yeah of jubilo am come as sure as sunrise. Yessah, yessah. De Lawd done sent you-all down heah, you's de Lawd's people, de Lawd come swif' bofe afoot an' on horseback.

[*Ben sings spiritual. Soldiers at the fire join in or else follow it with a song of their own. Ben clears table. Corse spreads out map and papers.*]

CORSE

We've marched and fought now for over a hundred days, but Atlanta has fallen at last. Perhaps we'll have a little rest.—What regiment guards the roads and bridges?

ESTES

Colonel Atkins with the Weehawken Fusiliers.

CORSE

Then all is safe.

[*Bugle call in distance.*]

ESTES

There goes tattoo in the cavalry camp.

[*Drum beats tattoo near by as if from infantry camp. Men leave camp fire and go off, singing "Rally Round the Flag."*]

Good-night, General.

[*Estes sits by fire. Corse lies down on camp cot in doorway of tent. Sentinel paces to and fro among the trees at the back.*]

CORSE

Good-night, Captain. Go you and get your sleep. This is our first quiet twelve hours in one hundred days and nights.

ESTES

No, General, I have no desire of sleep. There is something uneasy in these Southern woods.

CORSE

My boy, a soldier cannot afford to indulge imagination. You have done three men's work in these past three months. I have recommended you to Sherman for promotion.

[*Corse rests; Estes soliloquizes.*]

ESTES

What does promotion mean in this tragic suicide of a nation? Three and a half years—brother against brother—lover against sweetheart.—Come, I must keep my mind on work.

[*Goes to table, looks at map.*]

Hood is desperate, and we so far from our base of supplies: two million rations and ammunition of all kinds at Kenesaw Mountain, defended only by one regiment. Should Hood interpose between Sherman and us he could certainly strike that point before we could relieve it. It would be fatal to this whole army.

[*Returns to fire.*]

Why am I so moody to-night? By to-morrow General Corse expects to have the railroad repaired; then we shall be ready for them. Now for a little sleep.

[*Lies down. Tremolo music, "Home Sweet Home." A shot in the distance. Sits up. Another shot.*]

Firing on the pickets again. No rest for the soldier.

[*Several more shots; a volley. Estes and Corse both sit up.*]

Heavy firing, General, on the picket line.

CORSE

Yes, I heard the first shot.

ESTES

Shall I arouse the camp?

CORSE

No, when we get word from the Weehawken Fusiliers, 'twill be time enough. Let the men rest. Hark!

[*Horse effect off L.*]

SENTINEL

Halt. Who comes there?

REED [*off*]

Friend, with the countersign.

SENTINEL

Dismount, friend. [*Pause, clashing of sabre.*] Advance and give the countersign. [*Pause.*] Countersign correct. Advance.

REED

Is the general awake?

SENTINEL

Yes, I think so.

[*Enter Captain Reed.*]

CORSE

Well, Captain, what news?

REED

Colonel Atkins desires me to say, sir, that the enemy in considerable force have attacked his outlying pickets but have been repulsed.

CORSE

Cavalry or infantry?

REED

Cavalry, I think, sir, from the ring of their carbines.

CORSE

Tell Colonel Atkins to hold his front without disturbing the command, if possible. This attack is probably to annoy us.

REED

Colonel Atkins believes, sir, that a signal for the raid was shown from the attic of the white house within your lines.

CORSE

Ha, that white house again, You hear, Estes? You shall clean out that nest in the morning. [*To Reed, looking at his map.*] This attack tells

me that Hood is moving; we shall have sharp work. His cavalry on my front—damn, he must have crossed the Chattahoochee. Tell Colonel Atkins to report to me at daylight.

REED

Yes, General.

[*Salutes and exit.*]

ESTES

And still no word from General Sherman?

CORSE

Hood has cut the telegraph. Look you, every corps of Sherman's army is clustered about Atlanta. Here is Kenesaw Mountain; here runs the Sweetwater, Kilpatrick guards the stream; has Hood slipped away from him? Here are *we*, thirty miles west of Kenesaw; here runs my railroad, and there is Kenesaw with only a few cavalry between it and Hood's whole army. This seems very serious.

ESTES

Kenesaw must be a very strong place, or Sherman would never have made it his immediate base of supplies.

CORSE

I hope it is, for I have a premonition that we are to defend it, and that right soon.—Take forty winks while you can; we shall have gunpowder for breakfast.

CURTAIN

Scene 2

[*Early morning. Grounds adjoining Corse's camp. Reveille is heard. Enter Seth with his shoulders hung with poultry and other articles of food.*]

SENTINEL

Hullo, Seth, you're out early.

SETH

Sleeping outdoors allus makes me hungry. I've been out recruitin'.

SENTINEL

Recruiting?

SETH

Swearin' in poultry.

SENTINEL

You seem to understand their language.

SETH

I'd done better, but I never kin argue with womenfolks, that's my weakness. I was just administerin' the oath to about twenty ducks when a lady sticks her head out the window and says she, "Here, Yank, what are you about?" An' with her braids hangin' down her neck she looked so much like Marier when she was about eighteen I swear I had to let 'em all go, except this old drake. He wouldn't keep

step, so I'd 'a' had to take him to the guardhouse anyway. I'm awful sentimental about vittles.

SENTINEL

Save me a bit o' white meat; they say this is going to be a busy day.

SETH

Well, old Tecumseh knows what he's about. By thunder, my grandfather fit and died in the Revolushun, and I fit and died at Lundy's Lane, but 'twa'n't a circumstance to Chickamauga.

SENTINEL

Yes, I read in a paper they've changed the theater of the war down here to Georgia.

SETH

Theater of the war! Thunder an' spikes, with this kind of a show there's some of us would be quite satisfied to sit up in the balcony.—There comes a officer. I reckon I'll git.

[*Exit R. Enter Chase and Wagon Master, L.*]

CHASE

Are your wagons all ready?

WAGON MASTER

Yes, Captain, all ready.

CHASE

Is the detail a strong one?

WAGON MASTER

Yes, sir; General Corse goes himself.

CHASE

Jove, it must be important. Be watchful; the enemy may be nearer than we suspect. There was heavy firing on the pickets last night. At seven o'clock move out on the road toward Burnt Hickory. We will overtake you with the escort. This way.

[*Exeunt L.*]

CURTAIN

Scene 3

[*Interior at Guilford Plantation. Helen, Annie May, Dunbar as Colonel C. S. A., Rhett as Medical Major.*]

DUNBAR

Helen, I know not how to advise you. This terrible defeat of Hood leaves our state almost entirely unprotected. If Sherman's army should pass this way, I shall be obliged to leave you, I know not for how long.

HELEN

No matter, Charles. I am a Southern woman and know my duty.

DUNBAR

You don't know the character of these brigands; the torch would be applied at the least sign of resistance.

HELEN

I have no fear.

DUNBAR

Now this General Corse has moved here from Rome, I must get word to Hood of his dispositions. If they learn I have been signaling from here my life is forfeit.

[*Bugle call outside.*]

ANNIE MAY

Merciful heaven, what is that?

[*They rush to window. Enter Confederate soldier.*]

SOLDIER

Fly, Colonel. Fly for your lives; the Yankees are close upon us.

RHETT

Where are they?

SOLDIER

Not half a mile, on the Hickory Road.

DUNBAR

Scatter! Attempt no resistance. Tell the boys to meet me at Bass Ferry.

RHETT

I'll get out the horses.

[*Rhett and soldier exeunt.*]

DUNBAR

Detain them in the house. Keep them here long enough for us to get away. They must not find our nest at the Ferry.

HELEN

Have no fears, Brother, have no fears.

DUNBAR

Keep them indoors, let them search the house from top to bottom provided they don't find the passage to the arbor.

ANNIE MAY

Depend on us, Charles.

DUNBAR

Good-bye, then; good-bye, Annie May. Remember you are Southern women; give those accursed Yankees the reception they deserve.

[*Shouts outside; shots fired.*]

Too late! The house is surrounded, they have seen my men. God's curse, we'll be captured sure.

HELEN

Hurry, hurry! You must go through the cellar.

[*Dunbar lifts up seat of sofa and goes down inside it; sofa is placed over trap. Dunbar drops his gauntlet near sofa.*]

DUNBAR

My life depends on your prudence.

[*Exit.*]

HELEN

Now, Annie May, our courage must meet the test. As you love him, be brave.

[*She sits on sofa.*]

ANNIE MAY

Oh, I will try; I'll do my best.

[*Enter Corse with drawn saber, followed by Chase.*]

CORSE

I beg your pardon. I expected to find armed men, not ladies.

HELEN

I only wish we *were* men; you should not enter this house so easily.

CORSE

And I prefer you should remain as you were created. I could never resist an army of soldiers with such eyes as yours. But were there no others here before we entered?

HELEN

Do you suppose, sir, a Southern gentleman would remain under cover when the enemy's bugle summoned him to battle?

CORSE

That depends more on the man than on the section he comes from. You must pardon us,

I have given orders for the house to be searched.

HELEN

We are prisoners, then, I suppose. Or do you come to fire the plantation? I believe that is a favorite pastime with you Yankee soldiers.

CORSE

Ladies, both your home and your sex shall be respected, but I have to satisfy myself that the laws of war have been observed.—Captain Chase, please make certain of this room.

[*Chase goes round tapping paneling, opening doors, etc. Annie May sees gauntlet on floor and stands over it to conceal it with her dress.*]

We do not come to make war on women, but you have a large amount of forage, my men and animals need it, and I am here to take it.

HELEN

May I ask your name?

CORSE

Certainly, madam. My name is Corse.

HELEN

General Corse?

CORSE

Yes, madam.

HELEN

Are Yankee generals so much better thieves

than their quartermasters that they go foraging themselves?

CORSE

My quartermasters have no fears for rebel bullets, but your fascinations have driven them from the field. They report to me incapable of making a second attack. I am therefore obliged to come myself.

HELEN

Sir, your attempts to flatter may amuse yourself, but they are distasteful to me. I ask no favor, sir, and expect none. Take all we have, sir, take it all. Sooner or later we must be pillaged, and I am powerless to prevent you.

CORSE

Madam, you are far from powerless, and while I denounce my quartermasters for their susceptibility I plead guilty myself. [*To Chase.*] Captain, take only that which our immediate necessities require. See that no depredations are committed, and let this disagreeable duty be over as soon as possible.

[*Chase exit.*]

HELEN [*aside*]

I must be less frank with him, or he will withdraw in pure chivalry, and Charles will be overtaken. [*Aloud.*] I am sure I thank you,

and I now beg pardon for my very unkind words spoken a few moments ago. Will you be seated, General? I am forgetting our old Southern manners.

CORSE [*sits*]

Thank you. My aide will report to me here when he has examined the premises.

HELEN

Annie May, dear, let us give General Corse a glass of wine. Will you bring it?

ANNIE MAY [*who is standing over the gauntlet*]

Oh—I—forgive me Helen, but I had a kind of vapor in my head.

CORSE

Come, madam, sit down, repose yourself, there need be no agitation.

ANNIE MAY

No, no, let me stand quite still; it will pass. [*Shakes her head at Helen, who does not understand.*]

HELEN [*fetches wine from sideboard*]

Take this, dear, and you, General. [*Pours.*]

CORSE

With pleasure, madam. I don't wonder my officers failed to take your corn and hay. Will you join me?

HELEN

It's been three and a half years since I have taken wine with a Yankee. [*Drinks.*]

CORSE

I hope for our sake it may not be so long again. Now, ladies, I must bid you good-morning.

HELEN

Oh, but, General, your officers are still searching. You must let them be satisfied we have no guilty secrets. Are you fond of music?

CORSE

Yes, but it's a long time since I've heard any.

HELEN [*going to piano*]

Would you care to hear me sing?

CORSE

Even a rebel song would sound sweetly, sung by you.

HELEN

Though I'm a true rebel, there was a song I used to sing long ago, before this war had made us enemies. I learned it at West Point, and I will sing it for you.

[*Sings "Benny Havens, Oh!" During the song Estes enters and stands transfixed. Helen falters and cannot finish the song.*]

ESTES

Unbearable coincidence—'tis she.

HELEN

How haggard he is grown.—Forgive me, General, I could not finish, that song reminds me of——

ESTES [*pulling himself together*]

Sir, we have searched the mansion throughout. I find nothing irregular. There are traces of a man's presence, but no sign of him now.

HELEN

My brother, sir, away at the war——

CORSE

Very well. Captain, I go to the railroad. To make assurance double sure, scour the grounds with a platoon. Ladies, I thank you for your courtesy. No blandishments on Captain Estes, he is the most rigorous of my staff.

ESTES

Forgive me, General, if some other officer . . . this house . . .

CORSE

Sir, you have your orders. Post a man in the cupola to watch those thickets by the creek. Good-day, ladies.

[*Exit.*]

ESTES

I heard the old song we used to sing, and, oh, what recollections crowded into my mind.

Helen, thank God, I have found you at last. Have you no word of welcome?

ANNIE MAY

Welcome! He wants a word of welcome!

[*She bursts into hysterical laughter and falls against the sofa, exposing the glove.*]

HELEN

She has swooned.

ANNIE MAY

No, no, I am all right.

[*Helen supports her.*]

HELEN

Would you have me welcome to this house a man who comes to search and spy upon us? If you respect me, sir, how can you ask such a question!

ESTES

What ghastly irony pursues us! Miss Dunbar, you forget that my duty is as painful to me as it can possibly be to you. I must search your grounds, but I can relieve your house of my presence.

HELEN [*aside*]

He must not go yet, I gave my word to Charley. [*Aloud.*] There is no need of further rummaging. I believe you have already gone through all our poor secrets. You observed,

I hope, how this cruel war has reduced us to penury and shame.

ESTES

Shame is something you need never know. Do you not think I am proud for you, proud that you stand your ground for what you believe right? I wondered why this house moved me so strangely, I hardly dared enter the rooms. Now I know why. They were yours.

HELEN

Then you can leave two women alone with their misery. [*Aside.*] God forgive me, I think I love him still.

ESTES

Can you tell me, on your honor, there are no Confederate soldiers concealed on your grounds?

HELEN

There is no one here but ourselves.

ESTES [*picking up gauntlet*]

What then is this?

HELEN [*confused*]

A glove, I think.

ANNIE MAY [*hysterically*]

I tried to hide it, that's why I was standing there.

ESTES

An officer's gauntlet.

HELEN

It's my brother's—Charley's.

ESTES [*drops glove as if refusing his enemy's hand*]

My enemy—her brother—— Where is he now?

HELEN

I won't lie to you, he *was* here, but he got away. [*Proudly.*] You won't catch him now, he's gone to meet General Hood. And I kept you-all here until he escaped. [*She breaks down.*] Why can't you-all have a war without breaking women's hearts?

CURTAIN

Scene 4

[*Drop in 1: Confederate rendezvous at Bass Ferry. A rocky cave among thickets alongside the creek. Rhett looking over a promontory of rocks with field glasses. A whistle like that of an owl is heard. Several Confederate soldiers appear.*]

RHETT

Here's Charley. I was afraid they'd nabbed him.

[*Enter Dunbar.*]

DUNBAR

That was a close squeak.

RHETT

You're sure no one tracked us here?

LAMAR

Doesn't matter much if they did. This place ain't no use now. We've got to join up with Hood somehow.

DUNBAR

They're probably too busy stealing feather beds and silver to bother about following us.

[*Sound of distant bugle.*]

RHETT

There's the call to saddles. [*Looks through his glasses.*] Yes, there goes Corse, the old fox. Good girls, they held him just long enough.

LAMAR

I suppose he's left a squad on guard. Guilford makes a regular watchtower for the whole valley.

DUNBAR

I don't care if he's left a whole company. I'm going back there and give 'em cold steel.

RHETT

Why, Charley, that's lunacy.

DUNBAR

Not a bit of it. You can go under cover all the way along the branch, and then through the thicket to the grape arbor. It's a lucky thing we dug that tunnel.

LAMAR

I'm game if you are.

OTHERS

You bet, sure, etc.

DUNBAR

This ain't a textbook war any more, not with Sherman marching through this country. This is scratch, bite, and gouge an eye out. Hurt 'em any way you can. Do you think I'd leave those Yankees in Guilford without murdering a few of 'em? I'll teach 'em what blood smells like.

RHETT

Wouldn't it be better to wait till dark?

DUNBAR

Now's the time they won't be expecting it. Come, boys, who'll help me nail a few Yankee noses to the barn door? [*He laughs wildly as they file off.*] There's women up No'th will be widows by bedtime.

CURTAIN

Scene 5

[*Interior at Guilford Plantation, as before. Helen and Estes standing. A Federal soldier in doorway, salutes.*]

SOLDIER

The grounds have been well combed, Captain, and nothing to report except this old nigger. He was hiding in the woodpile.—Step in, you. [*Prods in old Ben with his bayonet.*]

BEN

Yes, massa, yes, Missy Helen, yessah, no, sah, I didn't go fo' to do nuffin', nuffin' 'tall.

HELEN

Goodness gracious, Ben, what are you doing? I thought you were contrabanded down to the camp.

BEN

Yes, missy, yes, Massa Captain, so I was, jess so, I done cook suppah for de general, but dere was so much firin' an' sojers wid guns an' all militia doin's, I got kinda lonesome an' jest sorta crope home.

HELEN

Why, Ben, I thought you wanted to be free; you were singing blessings on the Lord for rescuing you from slavery.

BEN

Yes, missy, bress de Lawd, yessah, excuse me, Massa Captin, de day ob jubilo am come, it am fine to be delivered out o' de bondage, but it am sorta lonely when de guns goes off. Yes, missy, I reckon I cotch cole down in de big woods. I boun' I hankered fo' de old cabin behime de stables. I don' reckon us ole niggers is cut out for guns an' fightin', an' I fixin' fo' to need a clean han'kerchief, so I jest crope home.

HELEN

Well, Ben, you're not a slave any more, thanks to these liberators. You're under their orders, not mine.

BEN

Oh, please, missy, yessah, massa, don't go to tu'n me loose among all dese guns an' shootin' irons. It give me a misery in my knees. I figure de ole hay-barn be mighty comfortin' for an old nigger, and de sojers come along wid a pitchfohk an' harpoon me in de manger.

HELEN

Now, Ben, keep quiet. That'll do. [*To Estes.*] You see, even your beneficiaries seem to have some doubts as to your success.

SOLDIER

Shall I remove him, Captain?

BEN

Oh, please, missy, yessah, Captin, I jest want to be aroun' somewheres wid a little less militia.

ESTES

Let him be. Sergeant, I return to camp. Keep this place under strict surveillance, but do not enter the house except for cause. If these ladies have any complaint I will court martial the offender.

SOLDIER

Yes, Captain.

[*Salutes and exit.*]

ESTES

Helen, all the bitterness of all these years has not changed my feeling.

HELEN

What do *you* know of bitterness? Have your lands been invaded, your homes ransacked, your friends and neighbors outraged under your very eyes? This poor old darky knows more of real bitterness than you do.

BEN

Yessah, yessah, he sure do. Excuse me, massa, bress de Lawd who brought de chilluns outer bondage!

ESTES

These cruel times have taught me that there

is always right on both sides. But once in the struggle there can be no turning back. In all this horror I have clung to one memory, the memory of your love.

HELEN

You had best forget it. You will be a better soldier without it.

ESTES

A soldier is still a man.

HELEN

Our Southerners are at least whole-hearted and would scorn to utter endearments to a Northern woman while in the very act of plundering her home.

ESTES

I will not distress you further.

[*He is about to go, but his eye is caught by Ben, who has seen, to his horror, the seat of the sofa silently rising. Dunbar emerges holding a pistol. Ben dives to the floor in terror. Estes looks at Ben in surprise. Dunbar takes deliberate aim at Estes, but Helen strikes up his arm.*]

DUNBAR

By the infernal, it's Estes! Curse you, I've missed him.

HELEN

Charley, Charley . . .

BEN

Oh, nigger, nigger, mo' shootin'!

[*Dunbar leaps out of the sofa and draws his saber; Estes covers him with his pistol.*]

ESTES

So that is where a Southern gentleman hides, under the furniture.

DUNBAR

Shoot, you swine. I might have known you'd smell out a mistress across the whole state of Georgia.

ESTES

You deserve to die with those words on your lips.

DUNBAR

Shoot, Sir Galahad, we've got you. We tricked you. I planned it with Helen. She kept you talking till we could get back and snare you. You thought she loved you; why, she was laughing at you all the time. You're caught! Look behind you!

[*Estes turns; Rhett and Lamar appear behind him; Dunbar springs at him with saber, but Helen seizes and delays him. Estes fires, wounding Lamar; he draws his sword and defends himself against both Rhett and Dunbar. Shots and cries outside. Dunbar falls with a saber cut, Estes*

trips against furniture and staggers but recovers. More Confederates come up through the sofa. Old Ben in a frenzy of terror rolls round among the feet of the combatants, tripping them up impartially. Estes springs up on the window sill.]

HELEN

No, Charley, no! Harry . . .

ESTES

So it was all a trick. What do *I* know of bitterness! You lied to me!

[*He springs out of the window.*]

DUNBAR

I'll follow him to the pit of hell.

HELEN

Stop, stop! Charles, you're wounded. [*Clings to him at window.*]

[*Clashing of sabers outside, and firing.*]

Oh, he'll be killed—he has mounted his horse, they're all around him—they're fighting—God have mercy——

[*Sound of galloping hoofs.*]

RHETT

He's clear. Give the devil his due, he's a soldier. He's got his men away.

HELEN

I *didn't* lie to him.

DUNBAR [*bitterly*]

Your Yankee paramour. So you make love while men are dying.

RHETT

Come, Charles, you speak folly. Let me bind your arm.

DUNBAR

The last disgrace! Sabers me in my own home, dishonors my sister.

[*Confederate soldier enters.*]

SOLDIER

Colonel! Corse's engineers are mending the bridge.

DUNBAR

Get word to Hood. Take horse, the back trail by Allatoona.—By God, I'll repay you, Harry Estes, if it's the last act in Georgia.

CURTAIN

End of Act Two

ACT THREE

Scene 1

[*The boxwood garden, Guilford Plantation. Drop in 1 represents high hedges trimmed in shapes and an arbor. A practicable bench. At rise, Dunbar sitting solus on bench.*]

DUNBAR

There is no way one half so easy to catch a man as to bait your hook with a woman; and when Estes shall become my prisoner I'll invent a hundred ways to humiliate him. [*Looking about cautiously.*] And if he should happen to shoot himself, accidentally, of course, that wouldn't be my fault. Shooting? Why, shooting's too good for him. It's a long lane that doesn't have an apple tree at the end of it. I'll get even with him, never fear.— She comes; now to execute my scheme.

[*Enter Annie May.*]

ANNIE MAY

The Major said you desire to speak with me.

DUNBAR

Yes. Come here, Annie May. [*She sits by him.*] Do you love the Southern cause?

ANNIE MAY

How can you ask *me* such a question?

DUNBAR

Because a woman's heart is to me strangely incomprehensible. Yesterday—nay, this morning—I would have risked the fate of the whole Southern Confederacy, and my life itself, on my sister's loyalty.

ANNIE MAY

And would you now hesitate?

DUNBAR

Yes. I would not be unjust, but from this time forth she must know nothing which, if imparted to the enemy, would injure our cause. But you, my darling, you can be trusted.

ANNIE MAY

I am a weak, timid woman, but I love the South, and I love you, Charley. I would perish to save either.

DUNBAR

I rejoice to hear you say so. I believe you, but I will not ask so great a sacrifice. But I do ask you a service full of importance to me and to our country.

ANNIE MAY

Why, Charley, what can *I* do?

DUNBAR

Much. Everything. Like myself, you were astounded at the appearance of this Yankee lover of Helen's.

ANNIE MAY

Yes. She has never mentioned him in all these years, but I know she still cherishes some little keepsake he gave her long ago at West Point.

DUNBAR

Does she so? She is even falser than I knew. Well, you have heard of Estes' exploits, and the injuries he and his chief, General Corse, have inflicted on our people.

ANNIE MAY

Yes, the negroes are continually talking about them.

DUNBAR

He is a cold-blooded villain, and now that we men are compelled to leave here, you and Helen will be at his mercy.

ANNIE MAY

But, surely, Charles, he would not abuse his power?

DUNBAR [*aside*]

Like all women, I suppose she hopes he would.

Dare I expose the fullness of my plan? No, I must adapt it to her simplicity.

[*Aloud*] I repeat, you will be at his mercy, and you must keep in his good graces. When we have gone, suggest to Helen that she invite him over to dine.

ANNIE MAY

But, Charles, that would be dishonorable—and, anyhow, he might not come.

DUNBAR

If she appeals for his help, for the protection of her property against his troops, he must come.

ANNIE MAY

Oh, Charley I don't know, it is a trespass on a woman's delicacies.

DUNBAR [*rises*]

Annie May, any stratagem is fair in war, and we are justified in using any means to crush an enemy like that with which we are contending. Step by step we've been driven back, till now we've reached the very heart of Georgia. For a whole month you've seen the sad spectacle of roads filled with helpless people; old age and infancy, hand in hand, fleeing before these ruthless invaders. For weeks you've seen the heavens black with smoke ascending from Southern homes in ashes. Northern steel has grown red with the blood

of those who would defend their hearthstones against merciless odds. With your own eyes, this very day, you saw me struck down by this accursed Yankee, you heard the dying groans of our people as his minions trampled them in the dust.

ANNIE MAY

But I don't understand. You say he has done all this, and now you want to ask him to dinner.

DUNBAR

Perhaps, if he comes to dinner, something may happen to him.

ANNIE MAY

Say no more. To prove my devotion, I'll do it.

DUNBAR

Hush, then. Now, not a word to Helen; not one word.

ANNIE MAY

Not one word, I understand.

[*They go off L. Old Ben appears R. from behind hedge.*]

BEN

Not a word to anyone, massa; no, not a word. Oh, Lawdy, Lawdy, he fixin' fo' moah sojers an' mo' shootin' at de ole plantation. Gawd

help an ole niggah wid no taste fo' fightin'.—
I'll jest see if I cain't somehow discombobolate
dese notions.

CURTAIN

Scene 2

[*Sherman's headquarters at Atlanta. Sherman seated at table with his adjutant, reading dispatches and smoking a cigar. Telegraph instrument on another table, operator using it occasionally as if testing current. The adjutant is Taylor, whom we saw as cadet in the first act.*]

SHERMAN

Any word from Corse?

OPERATOR

No, General, the wire isn't mended yet.

SHERMAN

What do they think they're doing out there,
bird's-nesting?

TAYLOR

Here is a dispatch from General Kilpatrick.

SHERMAN

Read it.

TAYLOR [*reads*]

"Headquarters Cavalry Corps, 10 A. M. General: This morning the enemy appeared in force on the left bank of the Chattahoochee, drove in my pickets, and crossed the river in flatboats. He is now throwing a pontoon. My entire command is moving to attack him. Respectfully, Kilpatrick."

SHERMAN

Let me see. [*Takes paper.*] I wanted to see how to spell Chattahoochee. When I went to school in Ohio I didn't reckon on spending so much time down here in Georgia. If I'd known I'd 'a' studied more geography.—I'd give my Sunday pants to know what Hood thinks he's doing.

TAYLOR

General Slocum reports a demonstration in the other direction, sir. A rebel battery has thrown some shells at Stone Mountain.

SHERMAN

Any losses?

TAYLOR

Three newspaper correspondents.

SHERMAN

Good. I wish we could send that battery some more ammunition.

TAYLOR

There is a lettter here from General Grant, sir. He is anxious to be informed of your probable movements.

SHERMAN

My movements are most improbable. I don't make any movements until I find out what will annoy the enemy most. [*To operator*] Can you get Rome yet?

OPERATOR

No, sir.

SHERMAN

The harvest is in now, and the country is well supplied. We may take a little walking trip. It would be nice to give General Grant Savannah for a Christmas present.

TAYLOR

The mayor's committee has sent a letter of protest against your turning citizens out of their homes.

SHERMAN

We might call to the mayor's attention that this was done in their own interest. I may decide to burn the city.

[*Enter orderly.*]

ORDERLY

An officer has just arrived from General Corse.

SHERMAN

From Corse! Bring him in at once.

[*Exit orderly. Enter Estes, showing stains of travel. Sherman rises, shakes his hand.*]

Well done, Captain. What news?

ESTES [*in haste*]

Hood's army has crossed the Chattahoochee, has driven Kilpatrick back upon the Sweetwater, and is marching on Kenesaw Mountain.

SHERMAN

How know you this?

ESTES

We had a fight three hours ago on the Burnt Hickory Road near Guilford, with cavalry sent out to cover Hood's movement. An orderly from Hood's headquarters was mortally wounded; he was a Northern man pressed into rebel service; before dying he gave us the information.

SHERMAN

Then Kenesaw is Hood's objective. Our base of supplies. Was the bridge at Guilford repaired when you left?

ESTES

Not yet, sir, but they were at work.

SHERMAN

Damnation.—Operator, can you not bring that wire to life?

OPERATOR

There is still no answer, General.

ESTES

General Corse directed me to ride for my life and say to you he is ready and would move on Kenesaw in three hours unless he heard from you.

SHERMAN [*looks at map*]

In three hours? That may be too late.

[*Enter orderly with dispatch. Sherman seizes it and reads.*]

Here speaks Kilpatrick: "The enemy has crossed the river. I am falling back, disputing every inch of ground. I am now crossing the Sweetwater. His troops are pressing my right and moving in the direction of Kenesaw. We are fighting infantry, not cavalry."

[*To Taylor*] Send an officer back with Kilpatrick's messenger. Bid him interpose between Hood and Kenesaw and fight him recklessly with every man he can muster. Say the whole army will move at once to their relief.

TAYLOR

Yes, General.

[*Taylor and orderly exeunt.*]

OPERATOR

General! I think the wire's through—wait a moment. . . .

[*The reply signal clicks out on the instrument.*]

Corse's man speaking.

ESTES

Thank God!

SHERMAN

Send this message: Move at once to Kenesaw. Take command and hold the place at all hazards. Your messenger is here. Look for my signals on the mountain to-night. W. T. Sherman.

ESTES

Shall I be off, General?

SHERMAN

Wait a moment. This requires thinking as well as hurrying. It is strange, Captain. Hood seems to have known Corse's movements sooner than I did myself.

ESTES

We found a rebel observation post at Guilford, sir. A rendezvous of snipers. They have some means of signaling.

SHERMAN

Hum. [*Examines map.*] This is serious. Hood's ultimate intention is a mystery to me; I don't believe he even knows himself. I expected some dash on his part, but I had no idea he would be so bold as to attack me in the rear. I'll make him repent this.

[*Enter Taylor.*]

Colonel, send word to General Barry to be ready to move with all his best battalions at—[*looks at watch*] 2 P. M. The same to Howard.

[*Exit Taylor. Enter General Slocum.*]

Slocum, Hood is across the Chattahoochee and is now marching on Kenesaw; so report Corse and Kilpatrick. It may be he is only using a part of his command. I leave you here for fear of a feint. Use your own judgment.

[*Telegraph instrument clicks.*]

Is that Corse's reply?

OPERATOR

It's coming now, sir. [*Reads slowly*] "Dispatch—received—all—right—will—be—at—Kenesaw—in—less—than—two—hours. Corse."

SLOCUM

Bully for Corse!

SHERMAN [*to Estes*]

Captain, take a fresh horse; ride for the mountains and join General Corse.

ESTES

Hell-for-leather, sir.

SHERMAN

Pause at Guilford to be sure our communication is protected against a sortie. Tell him *SHERMAN* marches to his aid!

ESTES

Yes, sir. I will be with General Corse before dusk.

[*Exit.*]

SHERMAN

I kept Corse near Rome in anticipation of some such movement by Hood. If any officer in my command can hold Kenesaw, he will do it.

SLOCUM

He is courage itself.

[*Enter Taylor.*]

SHERMAN

Break up headquarters; sound Boots and Saddles; in twenty minutes we must be off.

[*Exit Taylor.*]

I leave at once and pitch my tent on Kenesaw to-night. Look out for my signals by red light.

[*Bugle calls outside, sound of cheers.*]

SLOCUM

Your men are keen, General. Always ready for action.

SHERMAN

They shall have it. Hood must be crazy to think he can outflank us old flankers.

SLOCUM

The country is ravaged as far as Marietta, you can make good speed.

SHERMAN

And this is what sounds so romantic in the books. Burning farms, deserted women, hungry children, crippled men. Aye, Slocum, war is hell.

CURTAIN

Scene 3

[*General Corse's headquarters office in camp. Seth Green on sentry-go outside door. Sound of marching feet.*]

CAPTAIN REED [*outside*]

Detail, halt! Order arms! Rest!

[*Seth salutes. Reed enters the office.*]

REED

Sergeant.

SETH

Yes, sir.

[*Enters.*]

REED

I have withdrawn our patrol on Burnt Hickory to post double guard at the railroad bridge. The whole battalion is gone with General Corse to Kenesaw, all save these few stragglers here at headquarters.

SETH

Stragglers, Captain? My grandfather——

REED

This is no time for palaver. I go to the bridge to see that all is quiet. Take charge of the office.

SETH

Yes, sir.

REED

Here is a letter for Captain Estes that has just come through the outlying picket. Give it to him if he returns from Atlanta.

SETH

Yes, sir.

[*Exit Reed. His voice is heard outside: "Detail, shoulder arms! Forward march!" and then the sound of marching feet receding.*]

[*Seth scratches his head.*]

SETH

In charge of the office! Well, I want to know. [*Takes the official chair and examines papers wrong side up.*] Commander in chief at headquarters! I wonder what would Marier say? Nothing like a good war to make a man of a fellow. Wait till I get hum agin, won't Squire Cooly open up his eyes! I'll perside at the next town meetin' myself. They said they never could do too much for us vet'rans if we went for sojers, an', by heck, I hope they'll keep their word. If they do it'll be more'n they did in 1812. By General Jackson, if they do I'm goin' to set in Congress. There'll be a lot o' stachoos put up to us warriors, I don't see why they shouldn't make a likeness of me. I'd look kinda good in Vermont marble. These trousers'd be hard for the stonemason, though.

[*Enter orderly; keeps his hat on.*]

ORDERLY

There's a darky outside says he must see the general.

[*Seth looks at him with dignity. Orderly removes his cap and salutes.*]

Bein' as you're in position of authority, ain't you goin' to treat, General?

SETH

Now you're talkin'. That's the way to speak to your superior officer. Certainly I be. Wait till I examine my commissary department. I seen General Corse keep it in here somewheres. [*Searches in desk, finds whisky bottle among papers.*] Nothing like being an officer and having command of the materials o' war. [*Seth drinks from bottle.*] As Grant said, I'm willin' to fight it out on this line if it takes all summer. [*Gives bottle to orderly.*]

ORDERLY

It's funny how a man can't seem to get to be a general without havin' a taste for whisky.

SETH

Then there's half a million generals in the Union Army.

ORDERLY

Well, General, what about the nigger? [*Puts on his cap.*]

SETH

Let him wait; I can't be bothered with niggers. I'm busy studyin' out this campaign [*takes a drink*], and I want my mind clear.—Take off your hat if you want your mind clear too.

ORDERLY [*takes it off very humbly*]

When will we move on our objective, General? [*Moves toward whisky bottle.*]

SETH

Why, you seem to have reached it. Here, that's plenty. That bottle belongs to headquarters.

[*Enter Ben.*]

BEN

Excuse me, massa—I jes' had to come in——

SETH

What do you mean by coming into headquarters without permission?

BEN

Yessah, massa, yessah, but dis is important; where is de great general?

SETH

Well, I'm in the general's place.

BEN

I mean de General Cohse, or de captin what had de fight yestiddy over to Massa Dunbar's plantation.

SETH

Well, he ain't here. What do you want?

BEN

Oh, Lawdy, Lawdy, is dey gone already?

SETH

Gone where?

BEN

Is de captin gone back to de plantation? If he has, he'll perish, he's betrayed, massa, he's

betrayed, and dis ole nigger don't want to heah no mo' shootin' and militia doin's.

SETH

What do you mean, you black rascal? This needs a clear head. [*Drinks.*]

ORDERLY

Excuse me, General, but I think my head needs clearing too.

SETH

No, only one clear head at a time. I promised General Corse I'd leave him the heel o' this bottle.

BEN

Fo' de lub o' de Lawd, sen' somebody to bring de captin back. 'Tis all a trick, an' Massa Dunbar is waitin' wid his sojers ober dar to catch him.

SETH

You're drunk. Captain Estes rode to Atlanta to tell General Sherman what a good-for-nothin' nigger you are, and General Sherman is coming over here to skin you alive.

BEN

Oh, no, massa, yessah, nosah, don't let General Sherman come ovah heah——

SETH

All this freedom's gone to your head. I'm

almost sorry I come all the way down from Vermont to emancipate you.

BEN

Please, massa, I'se done tole de trufe; somebody will be sorry for all dis.

SETH

What's that? Nigger, did you ever see the inside of a guardhouse?

BEN

No, massa.

SETH

Well, you will now. Take him there.

ORDERLY

Come on, you can tell the officer about it when he gets back.

[*Exit orderly with Ben.*]

SETH [*fixing himself comfortably in chair*]

As long as I'm in charge here there's got to be discipline. I don't like to be hard on civilians, but I'm kinda Revolushunary in my notions. My grandfather fit and died——

[*Begins to doze.*]

[*Enter Estes; Seth with difficulty disentangles himself from chair, papers, bottle, takes off his cap, and stands to attention very humbly but somewhat uncertainly.*]

Excuse me, Captain—I was just thinkin' over the plan of campaign. I was feeling responsible. Captain Reed left me in charge, and there's nobody else here but a few stragglers.

ESTES [*sinks wearily in a chair*]
What time did the general leave for Kenesaw?

SETH
Well, I'd just had my grub; reckon about two o'clock.

ESTES
Then he should be there ere now. God grant we can relieve him in time. Where is Captain Reed?

SETH
Up to the railway bridge, posting guard. Oh, yes, Captain, he left a letter for you. [*Rummages on table, finds letter, wipes whisky off it.*] I'm sorry, something musta got spilled on it. I don't know how that could happen. [*Conceals whisky bottle.*]

ESTES [*disregarding, wearily*]
Saddle me a fresh horse. I follow the General to Kenesaw. I have messages for him.

SETH
Why, all the spare hosses is gone with the general.—Say, Cap, you got to get yourself some rest, you're all tuckered out.

ESTES [*doggedly*]

I exchange advices with Captain Reed and then follow the general to Kenesaw.—Did you say a letter?

SETH

Yes, Captain, here.

[*Estes takes letter, looks at it, then tears it open and reads.*]

"I have been hurt and am in great peril. Annie May writes this for me. The men are gone and we are without protection. You misunderstood me yesterday, and I should like to explain before it is too late. Can you come at once?

HELEN DUNBAR."

Great God, what does this mean? Hurt and in great peril. . . . What peril? Enemy or not, that house is under our safeguard. I must go to Guilford at once.

SETH

To Guilford, Cap'n? There was one of them Guilford niggers in here just now with a lyin' story, said for you not to go.

ESTES

What? What's that?

SETH

I took and shoved him in the guardhouse.

ESTES

Where is this man? Bring him to me instantly. Hurry!

[*Exit Seth in haste.*]

What rigmarole is this? Her unworthy brother, I suppose, has joined with Hood. But what danger threatens? I know her proud and resolute spirit: she would not appeal to an enemy unless the case were desperate. Can some of the scum of our ranks have broken in upon them? And here am I, due and overdue at Corse's side.

[*Pacing the floor in agitation*] Why don't they come?

[*Enter Seth, orderly, and Ben.*]

Uncle, what is this I hear?

BEN

You's here, massa, bress Gawd you's here! Oh, Massa Captin, if de guns gwine shoot agin keep me in de guardhouse till it's ovah an' finished. Stay away fum de plantation house, massa, don' start up no mo' shootin'.

ESTES

Speak plain, you black idiot. Is this some stratagem of Dunbar's to prevent me from going to the house?

BEN

Oh, please, massa, yessah, nosah, Captin, I heah Massa Dunbar say de soldiers would ravage de ladies onless you-all was dere to save 'em; massa I t'ink it's better to *let* de ladies be ravaged dan start up all dat shootin'——

ESTES

Enough! Release him, he's crazed. What maddening mesh of circumstance! Sergeant, remain here, report my return to Captain Reed. Tell him General Sherman demands we guard the bridge if we have but a dozen men to do it. I must learn what's amiss at Guilford, then ride on to Kenesaw. I have news for Corse that's worth ten thousand men.

ORDERLY

Yes, sir.

SETH

Cap'n, you can't go alone—maybe it's a trap.

ESTES

Follow, then, if you can find a horse. For once they tally: a lover's yearning and a soldier's task!

[*Exit. Old Ben standing with his arms raised in despair.*]

CURTAIN

Scene 4

[*Interior at Guilford Plantation, as before. Helen seated; Annie May looking out of window. Sound of gunfire in very far distance.*]

HELEN

What is that I hear? A thunderstorm coming?

ANNIE MAY

It's the rumble of the guns. Charles told me Hood would attack Kenesaw this evening.

HELEN

There is doom in that sound. At this very moment those we love are in a life and death struggle.

ANNIE MAY

It may be the death of the Confederacy.

HELEN

It is the death of my love.—Why do you stand so long by the window? Whom are you expecting? Have you any idea Charley will visit us again?

ANNIE MAY

Oh, no, Helen . . . I'm nervous, that's all.

HELEN

Shall we light the candles? It's 'most too dark to see.

ANNIE MAY

Not yet . . . I don't want to see . . . I've seen too much.

HELEN

Why, what's the matter?

ANNIE MAY

Oh, Helen . . . No, I can't. . . . I've been worrying ever since that fight this morning. Your friend is sure to return, your brother will watch the house. . . .

HELEN

Estes will not return. He thinks I cheated him. This war has cheated us all.

ANNIE MAY [*bursts into tears*]

I—I—— Forgive me, I'm going upstairs.

[*She exits. Helen starts to light the candles. As she does so, Estes steals silently into the room in the dusk.*]

ESTES [*blowing out the candle she had lighted*]

Don't light them yet.

HELEN [*stifling a scream*]

Harry . . . why do you creep upon me so? Oh, I thought you were where those dreadful guns are speaking.

ESTES

So I should be. Quick, what danger threatens? How is it your hand can light candles and cannot write a letter?

HELEN

What do you mean?

ESTES

Your message which Annie May wrote for you.

HELEN

I sent you no message and know of none.

ESTES

Ah! It is your noble kinsman again, using women as his tools.

HELEN

But Charley is not here.

ESTES

You said so once before. I fear you do not know your brother as I am learning to. No matter; it was worth it, to see you for one instant in this last twilight of our love.

HELEN

Harry, I never thought to see you again. There is a curse upon this house. Leave it—quick, quick, before it is too late. Here, let me guide you to the window, you can escape through the garden. . . .

[*He goes warily toward the window; at which a figure appears; he fires, but at the same moment two figures spring on him from the doorway. Helen screams. Other Confederate soldiers rush in. Estes is overpowered. They tie his wrists and ankles.*]

DUNBAR

Ha, ha, ha. The perfect soldier. The perfect dupe: caught twice in the same trap. Was not the billet doux sweetly concocted? "The men are gone and we are without protection." Alas, my dear Estes, I fear women are your frailty. A seductive sister has her uses, after all.

HELEN

This is the first time a Dunbar has been a coward.

DUNBAR

A girl of spirit. She should have been a man.

ESTES

And so should you.

DUNBAR

You seem so eager for our hospitality, sir, you shall have it to the full. Now, then, you've had a tiring day—sit down—lie down—be comfortable.

[*They throw him on the sofa and tie him more securely. The guns are heard distantly.*]

You hear? At this very moment Hood annihilates your battalion at Kenesaw Mountain.

ESTES

And I not there . . . [*Struggles.*]

DUNBAR

The perfect soldier at a disadvantage.

ESTES

The perfect traitor.

DUNBAR

I weary of his Yankee repartee. Come, silence him with something that will give him sentimental pleasure.

[*Tears scarf from Helen's dress and gags Estes.*]

HELEN

Charles, you are beside yourself. This is not soldierly, it is not human.

DUNBAR

This is no scene for a woman. Go, get your cloak and gewgaws; tell Annie May; we leave this house in five minutes.

HELEN

I will not go. You are no brother of mine. Your acts of outrage have left me without pride of race or natural protector. But there is still the honor of this old house. I will not see it defiled, nor see you torture a man who answered an appeal to chivalry.

DUNBAR

You will see what I show you. It shall be spectacular. Men, take her away. Watch her and the other female.

[*Soldiers force her off.*]

Now, sir, through you we avenge a million shames and sorrows. You are no worse than

most of your cold-blooded Northern pharisees; but it happens to be your ill fortune to serve as an example. We may be ruined, but we drag you down with us. I have a taste for exchanging eyes for eyes and teeth for teeth. You remember your suggestion that I was to bring up the rear on alligators? That was your crude jest, sir, and I mark it on your mouth. [*Strikes Estes on the mouth.*] And you thought it your duty to report me for not parading to a damned Yankee tune; and here in this very chamber you struck me with your saber. [*Tears Estes' sword from his scabbard.*] It would be a pleasure to run you through with your own steel. [*Threatens Estes with the sword.*] But I save you for a shining example —a blazing example. [*Pauses and listens.*] This is no mere rhetoric. I have fired the house! [*Sound of crackling; smoke at doors and windows.*] Your armies have burned many a Southern homestead, we will burn one now for you—and leave you in it.

[*Estes makes a terrific effort to burst his bonds.*]

No use, my dear Estes—a lady's silken trifle is stronger than you might have supposed.

[*Flames begin to enter the windows. Women's screams off.*]

Now, I believe our arrangements are complete.

[*Throws down the sword; examines Estes' fastenings.*]

Quite comfortable. [*Locks doors.*]
I don't suppose you ever thought to take out any fire insurance. Well, well, we can't foresee everything. Yankee Doodle, the blazing example!

[*Exit through window. The room blazes merrily. Estes struggles valiantly but in vain. There is a sound of violent banging on one of the doors, repeated blows; then the panels are split by blows of a poker, and Helen breaks through.*]

HELEN

Harry! Harry!—Have they killed him?

[*Rushes to him, rolls him off sofa, tears off his gag, tries to loosen his bonds but cannot.*]

ESTES

The sword, the sword!

[*She saws at the cords with the saber, finally cuts through the bonds. They stagger toward door.*]

HELEN

The smoke—I'm choking . . .

[*She swoons. Estes seizes her and carries her out, apparently through the flames.*]

CURTAIN

End of Act Three

ACT FOUR

[*Kenesaw Mountain. A barricade of trees, rocks, and earthwork runs across the stage. Flag flying near center. Allatoona Mountain in the distance. Picks and spades heard offstage L. A small elevation R. from which a signal officer looks off with field glasses at the other mountain, and then downward as if along the slope of Kenesaw Mountain. Soldiers with muskets behind breastworks. Colonel Fitch is heard offstage L.*]

FITCH

That's right, men—work for your lives—the enemy is only a few miles away, but if he fails to attack us for an hour we are safe. General Corse should be here at any moment.

[*Enters L.*]

SIGNAL OFFICER

Colonel, will you step here? I see an officer and some men riding furiously along the base of the mountain.

FITCH

Who can they be? [*Ascends the elevation.*]

SIGNAL OFFICER
Someone, I hope, from Sherman. I can only see them with the glasses.

FITCH
Keep watch of them.

[*Enter Artillery Captain Kingsbury, walking on top of the works L.*]

KINGSBURY
Colonel, do you see that rebel flag?

FITCH
Where?

KINGSBURY [*pointing down*]
Down there by that clump of trees.

FITCH
I fear they have planted a battery.

KINGSBURY
Yes, they are just coming into position.

FITCH
How much ammunition have you left?

KINGSBURY
Only ten rounds, Colonel. May I give them one? I should like to stir them up before they get placed.

FITCH
All right, let them have it.

[*Exit Captain L.*]

SIGNAL OFFICER

There is another rebel flag—yes, and still another [*pointing*].

FITCH

And here are more on our right. Everywhere they swarm like hornets. This is no rebel mob, this must be Hood's whole army.

[*Sound of cannon off L., followed by heavy explosion in the distance. Men rush on the rampart and look off; they cheer.*]

SIGNAL OFFICER

Bravo, artillery! There goes a caisson. A fair hit! They are bringing up more guns, Colonel.

FITCH

And still no sign of Corse. Why don't he come? Can they have cut him off?

A SOLDIER

Colonel, there's someone creeping through the brush. Shall I fire on him?

SETH [*off*]

Point that gun the other way, ye durn fule. Don't you know me?

[*Seth enters with a couple of hens slung round his neck.*]

Howdy. Colonel. I picked up a couple o' fowls fer ye on the way. Didn't know how ye might be fixed fer grub.

FITCH

And who are you?

SETH

I'm Seth Green; my grandfather fit an' died in the——

FITCH

Never mind your grandfather; where are you from?

SETH

I jest cut across the pasture, I callated it'd be quicker. Captain Estes sent me ahead to take keer o' the ladies.

FITCH

The ladies?

SETH

Yes, Colonel. The plantation house burned down, but Cap Estes saved the girls. He's busy with a bunch o' rebs this minute, so I snuck the girls off in a brier patch till I seed what your accommodations was like.

FITCH

This is no time for trifling. Then you have met the enemy?

SETH

Met 'em? Well, I want to know. We been dodgin' 'em the past two hours. I could see Gen'ral Corse down there by the river——

FITCH

Thank God!

SETH

He couldn't see me, he was too busy. The Johnnies was attackin' him before he got off the cars, an' burned down the bridge, but he's fixin' another; he'll be here right smart soon.

FITCH

Men, General Corse is on his way; we still have a fighting chance.

[*Men cheer.*]

[*To Seth*] Are the enemy in great force?

SETH

Acres on 'em; a bumper crop. Well, Colonel, kin I call in my little flock o' sheep? I don't like to leave 'em out thar in the brush, they'll git ants up their stockin's.

[*Looks off L.*] Here they be now. Two white sheep and two black.

[*Enter Helen and Annie May, escorted by old Ben and old colored Mammy.*]

HELEN

Are you the commanding officer, sir? We are obliged to appeal to you for protection.

ANNIE MAY

I fear our visit is ill-timed, but we have nowhere else to go.

FITCH [*aside*]

This is highly irregular. [*Aloud*] I can hardly offer you security, but you may have such shelter as we can afford.

BEN

Lawdy, lawdy, massa; yessah, nosah, missy, dis don' 'pear to me a place ob safety. Please, Massa Commander, I done run away fum de plantation to escape de guns an' shootin', and heah looks like de native home of all maliciousness.

MAMMY

Shet up, you ole black trash. Always commiseratin' fo' yo'self.

FITCH

My ears suggest you are of the Southern cause?

ANNIE MAY

We have no cause but misery.

HELEN

Colonel Estes was attacked by outposts, and this brave man [*indicating Seth*] guided us through the woods.

SETH

Shucks, 'twan't nothin'. I'd 'a' done the same for Marier when she was young and sightly.

FITCH

I fear this is no time for social chat. You must retire at once to a position of less exposure. [*To signal officer*] Captain, escort these ladies to the point of rocks.

SIGNAL OFFICER

Yes, Colonel. This way, ladies.

BEN

Less exposure! Oh, massa, wait fo' Uncle.—
I don't nevah want to be emancipated no mo'.

[*Signal officer leads Helen, Annie May, Ben and Mammy off R. Sound of distant firing; also drums off L.*]

SOLDIER

Hark! Colonel, do you hear?

FITCH

What? It must be Corse.

OTHERS

Do you see him? Where? Hurrah! [*etc. ad lib.*]
[*They mount the rampart.*]

SETH

Thar he be, comin' up that ravine. Here he is, here he is.

[*Enter Corse, soldier with flag, Captain Chase, and one or two other soldiers.*]

FITCH

Thank God, General, you are in the nick of time.

[*He and Corse shake hands.*]

CORSE

I hope so, Colonel. They have given us a hot afternoon. Hood has more power than I reckoned on.

FITCH

Their attack was so fierce, they have cut us off from our ammunition depot, and what we have here is nearly spent.

CORSE

No message yet from Sherman? [*Looks off with glasses.*] He should come through that notch on the mountain.

FITCH

Nothing yet, sir. I begun to wonder if he realized our extremity.

SOLDIER

Yonder comes a flag of truce.

CORSE

Ha, Colonel, go down and meet it. Blindfold the officer and bring him in.

[*Exit Fitch L.*]

Probably a demand for me to surrender. I wonder if they think that is what I came here

for. Sherman expects me to hold this place, and we must do it, or die trying. But why is there still no sign of Estes?

[*Enter Fitch with Major Lamar, bearing flag of truce, Major Lamar blindfolded.*]

FITCH

General Corse, this is Major Lamar, of General Hood's staff.

CORSE

Well, sir, what is your business?

LAMAR

Here is a communication from General Hood in command of the Confederate army.

CORSE [*takes it and reads*]

"You are surrounded with infantry and artillery sufficient to take your position beyond a doubt. In order to avoid unnecessary effusion of blood I demand the immediate and unconditional surrender of your post and the forces under your command. I give you five minutes to consider."

I don't need one minute. Go back, sir, to General Hood and tell him I am ready for the unnecessary effusion of blood as soon as he chooses to commence it. Go, sir.

[*Exeunt Fitch and Lamar L. Enter signal officer R.*]

SIGNAL OFFICER

General, not a mile away, off to the left, come some of Kilpatrick's cavalry. A party of rebels are trying to intercept them.

CORSE [*springs on the rampart, looks down through glasses*]

'Tis Estes! He'll be killed or captured, certain.

SETH

If that's Cap Estes, let me dash out and help him, Gen'ral.

CORSE

It would do no good. No man must leave the works. There he comes! He cannot avoid them, he must fight. His horse must be pretty well foundered. Oh, if I could only help him!

SIGNAL OFFICER

They've formed a line in front of him.

CORSE

By heaven, he has charged through them. Here he comes, here he comes—he has fallen from his horse!

SETH

He's up agin! Boys, he's from Vermont.

CORSE

Gallant fellow! By God, he's got behind that cover—he's made it!

[*Cheering offstage L. Enter Estes, covered with mud and battle-worn, exhausted. Corse embraces him.*]

Well done, my brave boy, well done!

]*Enter Helen R. Estes embraces her.*]

HELEN

Thank God, Harry, you are safe. I saw it all from yonder rocks. My brave, my gallant Harry.

ESTES

Helen darling, I was terrified for fear you had not reached this shelter. But you must not stay here, they are upon us.

HELEN

I am safe now you are here.

SIGNAL OFFICER

The enemy is moving.

[*Shouts offstage, "Here they come!" The men kneel behind the rampart and aim their muskets.*]

ESTES

Retire to the cover of those rocks.

[*Helen exit R.*]

CORSE

Let no man speak nor fire till I give word. Comrades, we are soldiers here from New Hampshire, Vermont, and New Jersey; we must surrender, or fight as we never have

fought before. I will not deceive you: we are less than two thousand; the enemy more than six times that number. We cannot surrender; then let us fight, and may God defend the right.

[*Cheering offstage on both sides, as though their forces extended both R. and L.*]

Now, lay for them, let every shot count. Estes, go to the right and watch for my signal.

[*Exit Estes L.*]

Steady, men, steady. Here they come!

[*Rebel orders heard off R. and behind: "Forward, men! Move straight to the front! Steady on the right! Give 'em steel, they don't like the taste of it." A pause; then a voice very close, "Ware are ye, Yanks? Ware are ye, Yanks?"*

CORSE [*springing up*]

Here we are! Fire, boys. Give it to 'em. Fire!

[*Firing on both sides, shouting ad lib. Firing gradually slackens.*]

Cease firing. Save your ammunition.

SETH [*jumps up on rampart*]

See 'em go! Bully! Set 'em up agin, will ye? We're here, Vermont.

[*Enter men with stretchers, remove two wounded.*]

By thunder, Gen'ral, they ain't had a belly-full, they're comin' agin.

CORSE

Every man to his post. Ready all. Fire!

[*Firing again. Corse mounts the rampart to cheer his men, falls back wounded in the head. Seth brings him down. Firing ceases. Enter Estes L.*]

ESTES

Is he dead?

CORSE

No. I am worth a hundred dead men yet, and I'll defend this post.

[*They bandage Corse's head.*]

SIGNAL OFFICER

A signal on Allatoona Mountain. See it!

[*A small flag is waved on the skyline.*]

CORSE

Sherman!

[*They cheer.*]

What does he say?

SIGNAL OFFICER [*slowly*]

"Coming—to—your—aid.—We—are—within—five—miles.—Sherman."

CORSE

Signal back: We—have—repulsed—them—twice. We—are—holding—on.

[*Enter Fitch L.*]

FITCH

General, Colonel Patrick is killed.

CORSE

I am sorry to hear it. He was a brave soldier.

FITCH

We can get no more ammunition. Our reserve is on the other side of the stream, and the bridge is covered by sharpshooters. No man can cross it and live.

SETH

Gen'ral, I'm an old fule, not much use even to Marier. Let me have a try.

CORSE

Go, Seth, and may God protect you.

SETH

Ef I don't come back, Cap, tell Marier them wool underclothes is too warm for South Ameriky.

FITCH

Come, then, I'll show you the way.

[*Exeunt Fitch and Seth L.*]

ESTES [*mounts parapet*]

General, he has started, and now he's on the bridge.

[*Firing in the distance.*]

They have seen him, they are shooting at him! Miracle, he is over safe and has got the boxes. He is preparing to return. Our right wing is trying to cover him with their fire. Here he

comes again! Good old Seth, and they said he was too old to fight.

[*Firing heard again.*]

By heaven, he has fallen—he's hit! No—he crawls—he is up again— a few feet more—he's over, he's over!

[*Cheering off L. Enter Seth L. wounded, sets down box of ammunition and collapses alongside Corse.*]

CORSE

Are you all right?

SETH

Gen'ral, I'm an old fule, but I figgered we needed it. [*Takes flask of whisky from his pocket and drinks.*] Have some, Gen'ral; I took some o' yours at headquarters. Them medical supplies is as important as bullets.

CORSE

Take command, Estes; I'm faint. [*Swoons.*]

SIGNAL OFFICER

They are coming again.

ESTES [*to one of the soldiers*]

Go tell Colonel Allen to contract his lines and refuse——

SOLDIER

He is dead, sir.

ESTES

Then Major Wharton——

SOLDIER

Badly wounded, sir.

ESTES

Then whoever is in command, tell him to close in on our center here. Oh, if night would only come!

[*To signal officer*] Did you observe that officer who led the last attack?

SIGNAL OFFICER

Yes, and there he comes again, leading as before. He has a charmed life.

ESTES [*looking off*]

By heaven, it's Dunbar!

[*Stage gradually grows darker.*]

SETH

Dunbar? Mebbe I can pick him off. [*Levels his gun.*]

ESTES

Leave him for me. I shall have a personal pleasure in dealing with him.

SIGNAL OFFICER

Watch yourselves, men; they mean business this time.

ESTES

And so do we. Soldiers, our ranks are thin but our hearts are brave; repulse them this once

and the day is ours. Sherman watches us from yonder mountain; let us show him we are worthy to be his troops.

SIGNAL OFFICER

See, his signal fire!

[*Red light seen on the skyline of the mountain.*]

ESTES

Thank God! Men, Sherman is just across the valley. Stand fast.

[*Rebel yells off.*]

Come on, you savage devils; we're ready for you.

[*Corse is placed against the inside slope of rampart by Seth and others.*]

The attack is on our right this time. Now they swing this way. Ready, men. Fire!

[*Firing; rebels are seen mounting the rampart L. and R. The men jump up.*]

They're on the works. Meet them with the bayonet!

[*The flag falls—they fight with bayonets. Estes jumps down from the rampart and seizes the flag as Dunbar mounts the parapet at L. 2, where most of the fighting takes place, a drawn saber in one hand and rebel flag in the other.*]

DUNBAR

All Southern gentlemen, follow me!

[*Advances toward Estes on the rampart. Estes still has the Northern flag in one hand and saber in the other.*]

ESTES

Here, sir, meet me for the last time.

DUNBAR

See how a Georgian can hate!

[*They fight. Corse revives and starts up.*]

CORSE

What, rebels on the works!

[*Rises with an effort, aims his pistol at Dunbar, and fires. Dunbar falls, rolls down the works to the front, dies still holding the Confederate flag.*]

SOLDIERS [*mount the rampart and shout*]

See them run, see them run. Hurrah!

ESTES

Misguided heart! His blood need not be on my conscience.

SETH

Yonder comes Gen'ral Sherman. I want to know!

[*Enter Helen, Annie May, Ben, and Mammy.*]

BEN

Yessah, nosah, don' let dat General Sherman emasculate no mo' niggers.

MAMMY

Is the white folks done fightin'? Bless Gawd, niggers got mo' sense.

[*Estes is standing on the rampart, center, with the flag in his hand.*
Helen and Annie May and Ben run on from R. Annie May kneels by Dunbar's body. Helen holds out her hands toward Estes. Men on the works waving their hats look off down the mountain. Corse leans exhausted against the rampart, supported by a soldier. The bonfire on the skyline grows bigger. Estes replaces the flag on the rampart, where it flutters bravely. He comes down to Helen and takes her in his arms. He looks at the body of Dunbar.]

ESTES [*to her*]

My poor dear. I shall live to make you forget these dreadful times.

HELEN

Some day there will be no Blue and no Gray.

CURTAIN

[*Second curtain: entry of Sherman and his officers. Corse and Sherman shake hands. Estes and Rhett ditto. Seth and Ben ditto, etc., etc.*]

END OF THE PLAY

DATE DUE / DATE DE RETOUR

CARR McLEAN 38-297

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